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The Jesuits in Spanish Florida, or an Inquiry into the Circumstances Leading to the Abandonment of This Mission

Edward Joseph O'Brien
Loyola University Chicago

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THE JESUITS IN SPANISH FLORIDA
OR
AN INQUIRY INTO THE CIRCUMSTANCES
LEADING TO THE ABANDONMENT OF
THIS MISSION

BY
EDWARD JOSEPH O'BRIEN, S.J.

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF
ARTS IN LOYOLA UNIVERSITY

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VITA

Edward Joseph O'Brien, S.J., was born in Chicago, Illinois, May 4, 1914.

He was graduated from St. Ignatius High School, Chicago, Illinois, June, 1932, and attended St. Xavier University from 1932 to 1936.

The Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in History was conferred by Loyola University, June, 1937.

From 1939 to 1942 the writer has been engaged in teaching Ancient, Medieval and American History in St. Ignatius High School, Chicago, Illinois. During the past three years he has devoted his time to graduate study in the same field. He has written one article which was published by the Historical Bulletin, a magazine edited and published by the historical faculty of St. Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri.

The Popish Plot, January, 1937



MUSKOGEAN

POTOMAC R.
ALGONQUIAN

YUCHEE

CHESAPEAKE BAY

ATLANTIC OCEAN

CHEROKEE

APALACHICOLAS

YAMASEES

CHICORA

CHOCTAW

SEMINOLE

GUALE

COLUMBIA R.
SANTA CRUZ DE SABACOLA
SAN CARLOS
SAN ANTONIO (BUCKET)

SANTA ELENA
ORISTA
TOLEMA (SANTA CATALINA)

ST. JOHNS R.

ORFENOR R.

SAN ROORO
ST. MARKS R.
SANTA MARIA

SAVANNAH R.
SANTO SPIRITO
SAN VICENTE
SAN ELIAS

SAN JUAN
SAN JUAN
SAN JUAN
SAN JUAN
SAN JUAN
SAN JUAN

SAN FELIX
CANAVERAL
SAN JUAN

SANTA LUCIA
CALOOSCHIQUET

PROVINCIA (FLORIDA)
SAN SEBASTIAN

CHAPTER I

PROLOGUE

The tragedy of the Jesuit missionary venture in Spanish Florida is one of those isolated episodes of history which historians, until recent years, have shown a disposition to neglect. Protestant historians have avoided this story because for many years the tradition of "nothing of good can come from Galilee," was the vogue when speaking of Spain's contribution to our American heritage. Catholic historians have been preoccupied with the problem of proving that the historians of New France and New England have not been altogether fair to the Church of Rome. Hence only the writers of more recent years have investigated and sung the praises of Spain's colonial Empire.

Settled for strategical reasons, maintained for strategical reasons, and finally surrendered or exchanged for considerations of far more immediate importance to Spain than any profit she derived from it, Florida was also to welcome to its shores the members of the Society of Jesus for strategical reasons. In brief, it was a dream of a vast Indian empire ruled by Spaniards. It was conceived by

Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, founder and Adelantado of Florida, when the existence of the struggling colony was threatened by French aggression. He foresaw, as did his King before him, that a strong Spanish protectorate over the Eastern coast of Florida would be an effective brake to the ambitions of the French Huguenots, under Jean Ribaut, and, at the same time, afford the benefits of civilization to the Indians of the Peninsula. To this end he invoked the aid of the Society of Jesus, and its members responded with men to found a mission there.

The tenure of the Jesuits in the Florida mission field was a comparatively short one, but the story of their expedition is a chapter in the history of the attempts by Spain to affirm its ownership of North America in the area outside of that held by sedentary tribes of Indians, whose stage of culture was best adapted to the colonial institution developed during the early days of the Conquest. This was but another step in the policy developed by Philip II of carrying defensive expansion into the heart of the continent as a means of repelling the aggressions of his European rivals, of whom the most notable at the time were the French Huguenots led by Ribaut and Admiral Coligny.

In the beginning Spain used the great military power which had been developed in the long struggle with the

Moors in order to conquer the bronzed races and aborigines of America. Ferdinand and Isabella had finally succeeded in ousting these peoples from Spanish shores and now those nobles and soldiers who had helped in this conquest were eager for new fields to conquer. Many nobles were impoverished because of the long fight, and America, always a land of opportunity, seemed to offer a quick means of replenishing their coffers. Many more sought glory and gold, as likewise the spread of the Kingdom of God.

Conquerors had come to America in the long years from its discovery to 1565. But it was not till Pedro Menéndez was commissioned by the King, Philip II, that any permanent colony was established on the Atlantic coastline, a window, as Priestley says,¹ wherein Spain could watch her European rivals in their attempts to despoil her and a haven for the Grand Fleets on their perilous trips through the treacherous Bahama Straits. Menéndez complied with this command of the King, and San Agustín, Florida, was the first permanent Spanish settlement within the present limits of the United States.

¹-----
Herbert Ingram Priestley, The Coming of the White Man, in a History of American Life, MacMillan, New York, 1927-1933, I, 73.

Menéndez returned to Spain after he had made his little colony secure. He knew that if he was to keep his colony and have it prosper, he would have to convert the neighboring tribes of Indians. At the time that San Agustín was founded Menéndez had with him six secular priests, probably the ship chaplains of his expedition.² They were not adequate for the situation. A larger group was needed, a group that would set their whole endeavor on converting the tribes in the wilderness. The older religious orders³ already were laboring with great success in the established centers of population. Only sporadic efforts had been made to convert the tribes living beyond the frontiers. Dominicans had tried to establish a mission in Florida, but they only succeeded in adding new names to the Roman martyrology. Fray Luis Cancer, O.P. met death from the blow of an Indian hatchet, thus giving Florida its first martyr; others, as Fray Juan Ferrer and Brother Marcos also watered the soil

² E. Ruidiaz y Caravia. La Florida, Su Conquista y Colonizacion por Pedro Menendez de Aviles, Tomo I and II, Madrid, 1893, I, 475.

³ Francis Xavier Alegre, S.J. Historia de la Compania de Jesus en Nueva Espana, Madrid, 1842, I, 55. "When the Company arrived in this great city (Mexico) there were only three religious Orders there, that of St. Francis established in 1524, that of St. Dominic established in 1526 on June 23, and the Augustinians established in June in 1533." Also W. Eugene Shiels, S.J. Gonzalo de Tapia, New York, 1934, 16.

with their blood.⁴ Nevertheless, Menéndez knew that he would have to obtain missionaries if his colony were to be successful.

With this in mind, he appealed to his King, Philip II and they both wrote to the Jesuit General, Father Francis Borgia, a former Grandee of Spain, and to Father Araoz, in Madrid, asking for members of the Jesuit Order to repair to Florida and found a mission there.

The Society of Jesus was still in its infancy. It was only recently that the Popes had removed the restrictions limiting the new Order to sixty men.⁵ Throughout the periods of the first two Generals, St. Ignatius Loyola, and James Lainez, requests had been received for members of this new religious body to come and reap the rich harvest of souls which needed only the husbandmen. Father Francis Borgia, the Assistant for Spain, was acting as Vicar General of the Order pending the election of a successor to Father Lainez, when he received two letters: one from the Bishop of Popayán, Father Coruña; the other from Pedro Menéndez, the Governor of Florida.

⁴The Luna Papers: Documents relating to the expedition of Don Tristan de Luna y Arellano. Two vols. Trans. Priestley, Deland, 1928, ix.

⁵Institutum Societatis Jesu, Roma, I. (A Compendium of Bulls pertaining to the Society.)

They both requested the Vicar General to send a large group of Jesuits to establish missions each in their respective districts.

The Popayán mission field had already been cultivated by the Franciscans, but the Bishop, a former admirer of St. Ignatius, was desirous of having the disciples of that famous Captain enter his diocese. Father Borgia wrote to him in May, 1565, and said that "he (Borgia) is grateful for the request, but he cannot accommodate him until a new General is chosen."⁶

The request of Menéndez arrived at the same time. Borgia was still Vicar General and the reason for denying the Bishop of Popayán workers should have held. Nevertheless, Borgia, after due consultation with the Fathers assembled in Rome,⁷ overruled their unwillingness regarding the sending of men with Menéndez, and wrote at once to the various Provincials in Spain, telling them to send certain Fathers.⁸ Fathers Portillo and Rogel were named by Borgia; a third Father was to be named by the Spanish Provincials. Father Portillo, however, was unable to go, and Father Pedro Martínez, the Minister of the College of Valladolid,

⁶Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu, Epistolae Borgiae, Madrid, III, 801.

⁷Alegre, I, 5

⁸Monumenta, Epistolae Borgiae, III, 798

was sent in his place.

The question arises: Why did Borgia refuse the Bishop of Popayán and accede to the request of Menéndez? Borgia gives as his reason for such action that the petition of Menéndez would not suffer delay since Menéndez was planning on leaving for the New World in May.⁹ Nevertheless, another explanation might be offered.

The story of the Jesuit missionary activity goes clear back, beyond the Spanish approach, to St. Francis Xavier and Simón Rodríguez, who were sent to Portugal by Ignatius Loyola at the request of the King. Xavier was sent to the East Indies and there established the new Society, at the same time undertaking missionary journeys which brought him to the very shores of China. Rodríguez remained in Portugal where he organized the Jesuit College at Coimbra, the treasury house for all those heroic missionaries who were to labor in the East Indies, Africa, and Brazil. Simón, although suffering from illness, built up his province, adding residences, colleges, and man-power to three hundred and eighteen members by 1552. In 1547 he suggested to Ignatius the formation of the Province of Castile, obtaining at the same time permission from King John III of

⁹Monumenta, Epistolae Borgiae, III, 798

Portugal and Prince Philip of Spain. The Province of Valentia owed its beginnings to him; and Goa and Brazil were begun by men sent by Father Simón and Coimbra.

Brazil, the first Jesuit missionary enterprise in the Americas, was begun in 1549. The colonization effort had been one of desperation up to that time. The scattered colonies planted during the earlier years, each under separate leaders, were in a perilous condition when the Portugese Crown began to bring unity and civilized life to Brazil. The motives for the new attempt were defense against foreign intrusion, extension of Christianity, social stabilization and commercial exploitation. The King in looking about his Kingdom for suitable instruments to carry out his new program fixed upon the Society of Jesus for the religious work and Tomé de Souza, a most capable captain, for the civil branch. The Society was recognized by the Crown as its most important partner in the task of social and moral uplift and the transmission of Lusitanian culture.

"To the eyes of spiritual men Brazil was a heaven-sent opportunity, even though ordinary folk would have considered it a "vale of tears." Like practical pioneers in any barbaric wilderness the newcomers saw looming a tremendous task of hewing, grubbing, clearing, and planting in

the face of hostility from within and without the Christian fold. The land was young and stubborn; its brawling, wilful people were emotionally at the childhood stage, undomesticated in the ways of civilization. The task of clearing meant a rousing attack on cannibalism, paganism, and ignorance of the natives, and on adultery, promiscuity, injustice, and slavery practices of back-sliding whites. The planting of the sprouts of civilization would consist of the drugery of instruction and missionary work. Nóbrega could adopt methods used in Portugal for the whites, sermons and missionary excursions, while for cultivating the natives ingenuity would have to develop ways. The language, customs, susceptibilities, numbers, groupings, alliances, and respective intelligences of the jungle peoples would have to be learned before longer strides toward their elevation could be taken. And so it was done."¹⁰

The Jesuits succeeded admirably in their work in Brazil, in spite of many obstacles. There was cooperation between the religious and civil authorities and the results

¹⁰-----
 Jerome V. Jacobsen, S.J. "Jesuit Founders in Portugal and Brazil," in Mid-America, June, 1942, 22. Much of the matter from the above pages has been culled from the above article and other articles by Fr. Espinosa and Fr. Jacobsen. Cf. Mid-America, January and July, 1942.

were highly satisfactory. The Jesuit leaders, Nóbrega, Grã, Azevedo, Gouveia, and Anchieta worked in harmony with the governors and Brazil became a successful colony.

Hence, when the requests of Menéndez and Fr. Coruña reached Borgia, who had formerly been Commissarius for the missions of both Spain and Portugal, he saw new fields to conquer. Requests had been coming in since 1551 for Jesuits to go to Perú and New Spain.¹¹ But Philip II had early in his reign forbidden any but the three older Religious Orders access to New Spain of which viceroyalty Florida was a part. Francis Borgia, who always had a great personal love for the missions, even volunteering for them, according to Father Suau, as early as 1559, seemed to be most anxious to gain a foothold in the New World.¹² For many years he had been striving to found a Congregation of Propaganda in Rome. This organization was to control the missions, under the watchful eye of the Papacy, and its first aim would have been to install the newer Orders in

¹¹-----
 The Monumenta has many letters edited which mention the requests made for Jesuits for New Spain and Peru. Cf. Complementa Polanci, V, 550; loc. cit., II, 321. Epistolae Mixtae, IV, 171; ibid, IV, 620; Epistolae Mixtae, IV, 612; Epistolae Borgiae, III, 55, 201-208. Also in Monumenta Ignatiana, Series I, 262 and 278, Vol. XI, are the letters giving Borgia his powers over the missions of Spain, Portugal, India, and Brazil.

¹² Francis Xavier Suau, S.J. Life of St. Francis Borgia, 161.

New Spain. Philip II did not cooperate and the movement was dropped.¹³ But the brilliant success of the Jesuits in their pioneer work in Africa, India and Brazil undoubtedly influenced Philip to open to the militant missionary order the vast domains of Spanish America: first in Florida, then in Mexico and Perú, and in Aquaviva's time in Paraguay, New Granada and the Philippines.¹⁴ The negotiations, then, which Menéndez carried on with the King for a complement of Jesuits to help in the Royal undertaking were successful. The King addressed a letter to Father Borgia in 1566¹⁵ asking for missionaries for his Indies of the Ocean Sea and promising to provide them with whatever was necessary for their journey.¹⁶ He also wrote the same day to the House of Trade the instructions which he wished carried out in the Jesuits regard.¹⁷ The victory was not yet won, for the Jesuits were not admitted into Mexico, the heart of the Viceroyalty of New Spain, until the King requested them to enter in 1571.¹⁸ But

¹³Shiels, 18.

¹⁴Jacobsen, loc cit, 30

¹⁵Alegre, I, 4

¹⁶It was customary for the King, through his House of Trade, to furnish supplies to missionaries who were going to the outpost's of Spain's Empire.

¹⁷Ruben Vargas Ugarte, S.J. Documents Relating to the Jesuits in Florida, in Historical Records and Studies, XXV, 68-71.

¹⁸Epistolae Borgiae, V, 577.

an inroad had been made and Francis Borgia was quick to seize the opportunity.

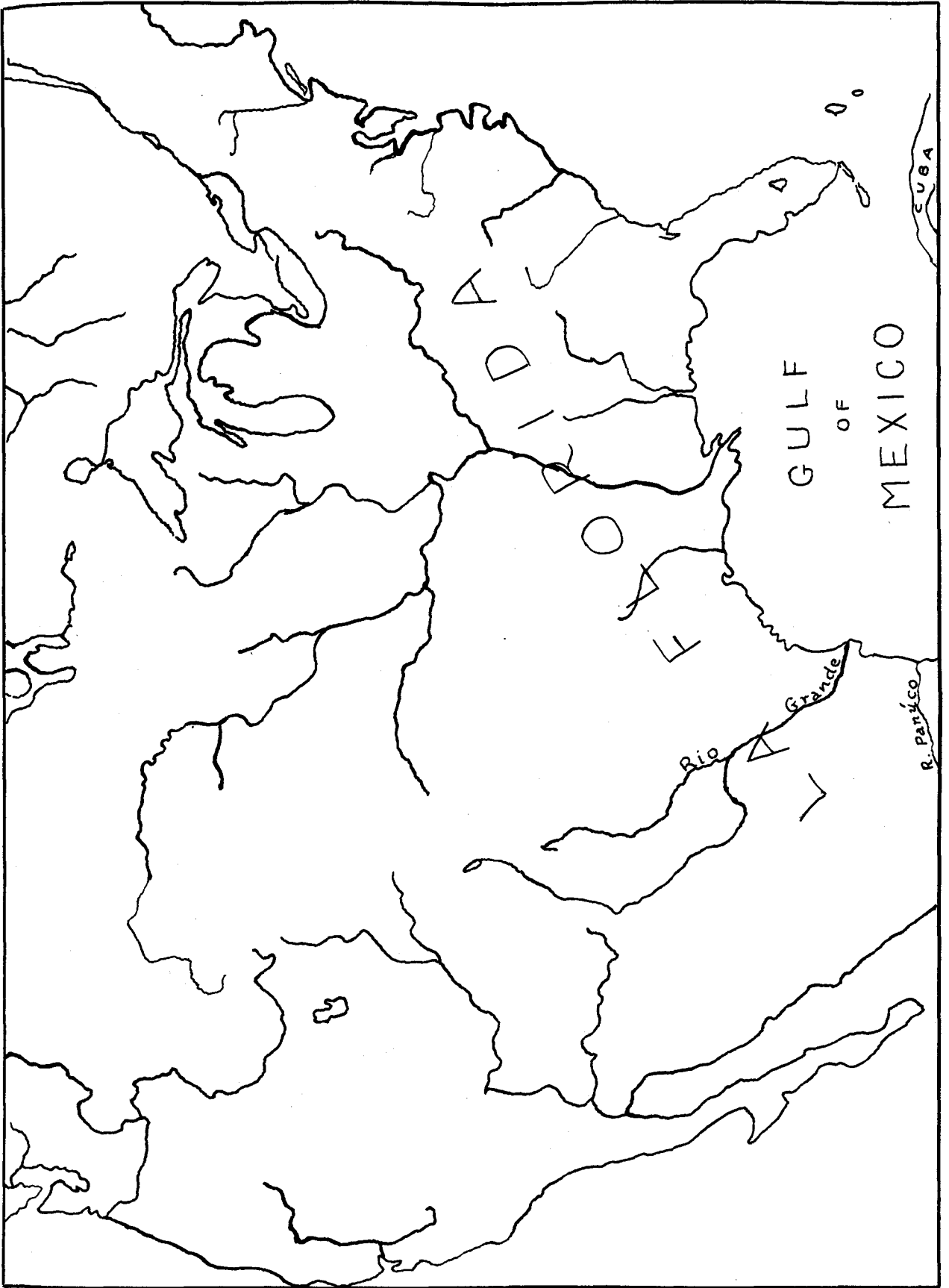
CHAPTER II

THE JESUITS ARRIVE IN NEW SPAIN

The entire Spanish possessions in the New World were called the Kingdom of the Indies. The two major divisions were the viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru. These were divided into Captaincies-general, presidencies and audiencias which in turn were subdivided into provinces.

Spanish explorers had minutely examined the coast of North America from Labrador to Panama, with results of importance for the history of geography, but of little significance for the building of their colonial empire. Mexico and Perú were thriving communities, but the land which was called 'La Florida' had been neglected, probably because of the unfriendliness of the Indians and the failure of the Conquistadores to locate immediately lucrative gold and silver mines.

La Florida, however, was not the limited territory we know today. "As a term in the political geography of Spanish America, the name 'La Florida' was equivalent to the eastern half of the present United States, or the



country from Mexico to Newfoundland."¹ In maps of later times this territory connoted the whole of southeastern North America north of the Gulf of Mexico.

To the explorers, as their ships lay at anchor in the spacious bays and inlets which mark the coast, the country presented a panorama of beauty, made still more alluring from the accounts of its fountains, streams, cities and gold, which the natives had recounted to minds eager for such news. Florida, particularly that region which now comprises the southeastern States of the United States, is tropical. Though situated well within the temperate zone, the Gulf Stream which skirts the shores as it passes through the Bahama Channel, gives the land that warmth which permits growth through all seasons of the year.

A fringe of small low islands extends along the entire length of the Atlantic coast and terminates in the half-submerged Florida reefs, the islands of Los Martyros.

¹Edward Gaylord Bourne, Spain in America, New York, 1904, 175. He is quoting from Lopez de Velasco's Description de las Indias, 157. This area included the present States of Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, New York, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Tennessee. The attempts at colonization and mission endeavor extended only as far north as the Rappahannock River in Virginia. Also cf. Alegre, I, 13.ff.

Between these and the shore is formed an endless succession of long, shallow, enclosed lagoons, navigable for vessels of very light draft, so that it is possible to sail the entire length in land-locked waters within sight of the sea yet under shelter from its waves. This same characteristic is found along the southwestern shore of the peninsula and along the southern coast of the present States of Alabama and Mississippi.

The beauty of the land, however, soon vanishes in the tropical tangles of underbrush and impenetrable swamps. The temperature is warm during all seasons of the year, but in the summer the heat becomes almost unbearable. In the section called Guale (Georgia) the soil is very sandy. Southward this soon gives way to the bogs, overhanging willows, stately palms and annoying insects of the peninsula itself.

To the people of Europe, and particularly of Spain, the shape of the land even as late as 1600 was not very well known. Spanish maps of the 16th and 17th centuries

give a general idea of the place.² Bays, lakes, rivers, are all depicted; the swamplands of Tegesta - the famous everglades - and the various highlands are marked. Among the more important rivers is the St. John's which empties into the Atlantic near the present site of San Agustín in latitude 30° 8'. The St. Mary's, Aix, Altamaha, Edisto, and Rappahannock in the north as far as Virginia all furnished suitable locations for the founding of mission stations and settlements. In the southern tip of the

²The Newbury Library, Ayer Annex, in Chicago has transcripts of many original Spanish maps. The originals of these maps are kept either in Spanish Archives at Madrid or Seville and the Portuguese Archives in Lisbon. A few of the maps which were examined and are pertinent are listed here: 1. Madrid, Ministry of War: Guerra: J-8a-la-a4. Aspecto geographico del mundo hispanico, que a su glorioso catholico rey D. Carlos Tercero el Magnanimo dedica, y corsagra D. Vicente de Memijecan IX, 1761; 2. Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (Coastal map of Cuba, and the other West Indies Islands and Florida, Cuba and the Gulf of Mexico) 17c; Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, Ms. CC 35, Er6-16. Martines, Joan: Map of Atlantic Ocean showing eastern coasts of North and South America and Western coast of Africa - 1587; Madrid, Naval Museum, Cosa, Juan de la, Mappa Mundi ... 1500?; Madrid, Palacio Liria, Vas Durado, Fernao, Portolan Atlas, 1568; Madrid, Biblioteca Real, Oliva, Hohannes, Atlas-1580; Archivo General de Indias, Seville, 61-6-20(3). Planta de la Costa de la Florida, 1687; Archives of Portugal Academy Science, Lisbon, Luiz, Lozaro. Atlas. 5 photographs and title page, 1563.

Floridian peninsula near the settlement of Carlos, the Caloosahatchee River emptied itself into Charlotte Bay, providing an excellent harbor for Carlos on the Gulf of Mexico. Tocobaga, a mission on the Gulf side of the peninsula, in the Bay of Tampa and Carlos, 10 leagues south, were two excellent harbors; the eastern seaboard had many more: Tegesta, the site of the present city of Miami, and a short distance south of Palm Beach; Matanzas and San Agustín, both near the St. John's River; Guale and Santa Elena, on the coasts of the present States of Georgia and South Carolina, near the Savannah and Edisto Rivers. During the period of the Spanish invasion there is no doubt that the country was densely wooded.³ Menéndez himself in writing to Father Francis Borgia, S.J., asking for members of the recently formed Company of Jesus to help convert the natives in his province, says:

³Woodbury Lowery. The Spanish Settlements within the present limits of the United States, Washington, 1901, I, 12.

Very Reverend Sir:

The Father Provincial and his Companions probably have written to you about the journey I made by order of His Majesty to the land and coast of Florida, which is a land bordering on New Spain, and the land to the north and to the west is very near Tartary, China, and Molluca; and this land of Florida must be continuous (terra firma) to Tartary and China or there must be an arm of the sea which separates them, the land of Florida from whence they came. These lands and provinces are very large and the people of them are groping in the dark for faith; it is a land of good climate and altitude in which people who go there will do well; and the necessary efforts being put forth with the people there, and have instruction, discipline and government, there is great hope that there may be a great opportunity for service to God our Saviour, and that the people of those lands and provinces will be enlightened and converted to our Holy Faith, through the industry, persuasion and labor of the people who may go there.⁴

Nevertheless, in spite of all the explorations and the reports of the various governors, including Menéndez, the people of the Old World were ignorant of the land of Florida. Many Spaniards had explored the Atlantic and Gulf coasts of North America and had contributed their bit to satisfy the Europeans want of knowledge.

⁴Monumenta, Epistolae Borgiae, III, 762

Christopher Columbus, the Genoese explorer in the service of their Catholic Majesties, Ferdinand and Isabella, made many voyages to the New World which he had happened upon. On his first voyage, he landed among the Greater Antilles, and after his initial stop at San Salvador (Watling Island), he went on to discover Española and Cuba. He did not then realize that Cuba was merely an island. His map-maker, Juan de la Cosa, however, clearly suggested, a short time later, that there was a coastline near to Cuba and that Cuba was an island. This fact seems to be confirmed by another early map, drawn by some unknown cartographer, for Alberto Cantino, an ambassador of Ercole d'Este, Duke of Ferraram in which both Haiti and Cuba, the latter as an island, are represented. This map also shows a considerable portion of the coastline of the United States, including both sides of the peninsula of Florida, and all this is represented as a visited coast.⁵

Though the eastern mainland of North America seems to have been visited prior to 1502, its rediscovery in 1513

⁵John Fiske, Discovery of America, II, 74-76. Fiske presents his proof for maintaining that navigators had definite knowledge of Florida before the expedition of Ponce de Leon in 1513. Also cf. Bourne, 61.

by Juan Ponce de Leon, Governor of Porto Rico and Captain of Florida, is the beginning of serious attempts by the Spanish Crown to settle the peninsula.⁶ Though situated near the mouth of the Gulf and discovered shortly after the explorations of the Greater Antilles, Florida was the last district to be colonized and exploited.

Ponce, after a very successful career as Lieutenant to Nicolas Ovando, the Governor of Española, had obtained a patent from the King and on the 3rd of March, 1513, with three caravels and Anton de Alaminos as pilot, he went in search of Bimini, a fabulous Island supposedly lying to the North.

On Easter Sunday, March 27th, 1513, he discovered the mainland, followed the coast northward till the 2nd of April, when he anchored in a bay at 30° 8' and landed. "Either because of pious regard for a day so great, or because of the allusion to the season of Spring, the most beautiful and luxuriant part of the year, and to the fertility of the fields promising all to the industry of their occupants, or, because it seemed most natural to

⁶ John Gilmary Shea. "Ancient Florida," article in Justin Winsor, Narrative and Critical History of America, II, 232. Regarding the exact date of Ponce's voyage there is some dispute. Alegre, and Helps, The Spanish Conquests in America, give the date as 1512; Kenny and Shea, give 1513. The cedula was issued in 1512 and Ponce was delayed a year. Hence, Kenny and Shea seem to have the better argument.

the budding state of their hopes, he gave it the name of Florida."⁷ He was not able then to resume his exploration, but ten years later he returned and finding the Indians hostile he withdrew to Cuba, where he died after a prolonged suffering from an arrow wound received at the hands of the Florida Indians.⁸

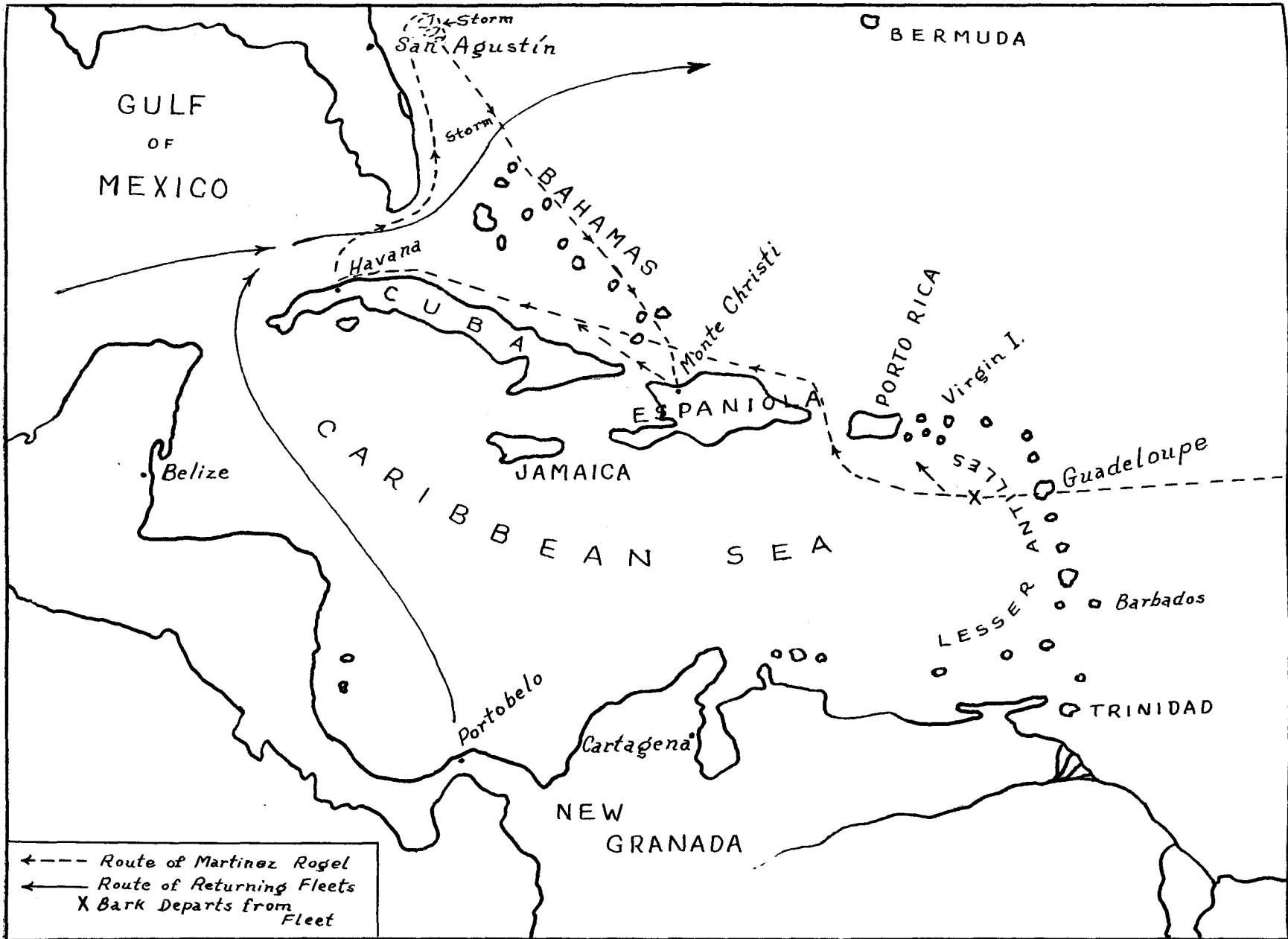
Juan Ponce de Leon died without solving the problem of whether Florida was an island or part of the mainland. Yet, explorers were not wanting to continue where Ponce had left off.

Lucas Vasquez de Ayllon, Panfilo de Narvaez and Hernando de Soto all led expeditions of exploration and colonization into the tropical bogs of the Florida peninsula. But the ending for all was tragic. Indeed the Spaniards had not gained a very favorable opinion of Florida. The chronicler of the Coronado expedition had characterized it as a land "full of bogs and poisonous fruits, barren, and the very worst country that is warmed by the sun."⁹ Yet in spite of the disastrous results of

⁷Alegre, I, 1.

⁸Fiske, II, 486-487.

⁹George Parker Winship, ed., Narrative. Bureau of American Ethnology, 14th Annual Report, Part I, 468, cited by Lowery, I, 252.



these expeditions, other commanders were ready to undertake the conquest of Florida. Don Antonio de mendoza, the viceroy of New Spain, Julian de Samano, and Pedro de Ahumada, all applied to the Spanish Monarch for a patent, promising to make good use of the privileges granted them and to treat the indians well. Father Luis Cancer de Barbastro, a saintly Dominican who had achieved marvellous success in Central America, conceived the idea of attempting a peaceful conquest of Florida. His expedition was defeated at its very inception and Father Cancer is listed as the first to give his life for the Faith as a martyr in Florida. ¹⁰

Don Luis de Velasco, the second viceroy of New Spain, was the next one to be entrusted with the project of colonizing Florida. He had given ample proof of his ability to the King, for he had governed Mexico well, the natives finding in him an earnest, capable and unwavering protector. But many treasure ships had been lost; the need of some colony on the Florida peninsula was becoming vitally important to Spain. This expedition

¹⁰Lowery, I, 425

was planned with characteristic prudence, and, after preliminary soundings by Guido de Labazares, the expedition was dispatched from Vera Cruz on the 11th of June, 1559, under the command of Don Tristan de Luna y Arellano.¹¹ The attempt was a complete failure as was the following one of Angel de Villafañe. On the 23rd of September, 1561, the King declared that no further attempts were to be made to colonize that country, either in the Gulf or at Santa Elena near the present city of Charlestown, South Carolina, on the Atlantic side, alleging that there was no ground to fear that the French would set foot in that land or take possession of it.

To show how much in error was the King's power to envision the future, in the next year, the French Huguenots, under the leadership of Jean Ribaut, entered Florida and were well received by the natives. These French corsairs and colonists erected a fort, which they called Charlesfort, in honor of their reigning King. Philip II, the heir to the throne and fortune of Charles

¹¹The Luna Papers, translated and edited by Herbert Ingram Priestley. Deland, The Florida State Historical Society, 1928. In two volumes (1559-1561)

V, immediately commissioned Don Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, his most successful admiral, to undertake an expedition to Florida for the purpose of driving out the French and of eventually establishing a colony. Armed with the King's commission and a small fleet of warships, he set out from Spain, leaving the port of Cadiz on June 24th, 1565.

The story of Menéndez's successful capture and complete annihilation of the French colonists has been told and retold. Some authors, as Kenny, are extremely favorable to him; others, as John Fiske, brand him as "an admirable soldier and matchless liar, brave as a mastiff and savage as a wolf."¹² But the fact remains that he was sent by his Monarch to dislodge trespassers from his land and he fulfilled his mission with an efficiency and dispatch which causes admiration even among his enemies.

He then founded the city of San Agustín on the eastern coast of the peninsula near latitude 30°8' on August 28, 1565 and he left a garrison in Santa Elena and Tegesta, two considerable districts wherein he hoped to make a foundation. "Menéndez was a dreamer, as are

¹²Fiske, II, 521

all men of vision and he pictured a great future for his Florida...which to him meant the whole of eastern North America. He would fortify the peninsula to prevent any foreigner from gaining control of the Bahama Channel, that highway of the precious treasure fleets; he would ascend the coast and occupy the land."¹³ After his initial success, then he returned to Spain to give an account of his fine beginnings and to solicit new missionaries who might work for the conversion of the natives.

Menéndez first attempted to obtain the Dominican Friars to establish missions in his province of Florida, but when they refused him, he appealed to St. Francis Borgia, the General of the Jesuits and to the King.¹⁴ The letter to St. Francis Borgia reads in part:

Very Reverend Sir:

... And understanding the great benefit that there would be in having some of the Fathers of the Society with me, I begged His Majesty to please allow me to take some, and knowing how much I desired it, he did so. I spoke of it to the Father Provincial in this place, to another companion in the house at Madrid (corte) and knowing the wish of His Majesty, they

¹³-----
Bourne, 150

¹⁴Letter of Segura to Borgia cited in Ugarte, 109

answered that owing to the death of their Father General, they could do nothing until after the General Congregation which would be in two or three months. And as I must leave on my trip by the end of May, with the help of God, and cannot wait longer, I begged them to write to you so that you might send some with me from Seville in order that they may be the first religious Order to land with me in those parts.¹⁵

All the obstacles in the way of obtaining Jesuits had not been eliminated. Menendez still had to convince the King of the feasibility of his plan. The Jesuit Order was at that time a comparatively new Order; as such, it was excluded from the Viceroyalty of New Spain. Philip II, notwithstanding prior prohibitions, acceded to the demands of his energetic noble, Don Pedro, and a letter was dispatched to St. Francis Borgia.¹⁶

Upon receipt of the letter from Menendez, Borgia, then the Vicar General, went into consultation with the Fathers at Rome.¹⁷ Overruling the objections of some, he dispatched two letters, both dated the 12th of May, 1565. One was sent to the Rector of the College at Madrid:

Very Reverend Father in Christ.

Pax Christi.

We have received one (letter) from

¹⁵Monumenta, Epistolae Borgiae, III, 762

¹⁶Letter cited above

¹⁷Alegre, I, 5

Your Reverence the sixth of the last, and because the provincials are now parted at this hour from their companions, helping Our Lord, and we do not know who the viceprovincials are, we address it to your Reverence so that when you can make those (viceprovincials) of Castile and Toledo understand what I shall say below. We have considered what the Bishop of Popayan asks through his letter, and to allow time to wait for the election of the General, we have seen fit to wait, and thus have written to the said Bishop in the letter which we send now, and which (we tell him) will be taken care of in the future.

Also a letter has been received from Don Pedro Menéndez which asks for some for the journey which has been undertaken to Florida. More so that your business may not suffer delay like the other, having to leave as is written in May, it has seemed to me after having consulted with others, and entrusting it to God, to give him two priests with a brother not in Holy Orders to accompany him. The first who shall be superior to the others is also named and from Medina. And to the viceprovincials is given the advice to hurry, for it seems that Don Pedro Menendez has no time for delay. If they take all May to get ready, we fear they will not be ready in time to leave.

If for particular causes which are not seen here, Father Portillo is not able to go, Father Bautista (Segura) rector of Monterey, is to go, who in his last letters renews his pleas to go to the Indies. And if for some reason he too cannot leave without too much inconvenience, Father Martinez, who is Minister of the college of Valladolid, is to go in his place; but in such a case the Province of Toledo must send a replacement for the said Father Pena.

If it is too much to ask the aforesaid Brother to make the journey, choose another in the viceprovince of Castile or Toledo, who will be fit for such a mission. I entrust all to the sacrifices and prayers of Your Reverence and of all that College.

Francis

From Rome: May 12, 1565¹⁸

the other letter was for those who were to leave for Florida:

To those who go to Florida.

With the occasion given us by this journey to Florida and the devotion with which Don Pedro Menéndez wishes some of our Company to help the souls of those people beyond those of his armada, and the haste there is at parting, it has made us determine to send some to those parts without waiting for the election of the General; and remembering the old desires of Your Reverences, and the other two you must take in his company and obedience, it seemed to be for the great service of Our Lord to be named for that mission, since you are the first of the Company to go to those parts, and since there is such great importance attached to the undertaking, there could not be sent any but persons of great trust, and by whom Our Lord would expect to be served with much edification and ardor, just as much among those of those parts as of Spain. Your Reverence and your companions go with great hope remembering that Our Lord sent you through Holy Obedience, and the same will be to His great favor and grace for those employed in His great service which must be expected from His infinite and great Kindness to whom we beg to give us

¹⁸Monumenta, Epistolae Borgiae, III, 797

all His Holy Benediction, and have us all in His Holy Protection. Of the rest which touches on the time and place of the parting, shall be determined by the viceprovincials from which provinces they are leaving. We entrust ourselves greatly to your prayers and sacrifices, hoping that you particularly remember the good and happy success of this enterprise.

Francis

From Rome: May 12, 1565¹⁹

In the meantime, however, the members of the House of Trade opposed a Jesuit Mission to Florida,²⁰ but the King, ignoring the diplomatic angles involved, deemed it best to accede to the request of Menéndez. A letter was dispatched to Borgia from the King on May 3, 1566, asking for 24 members of the Society for his foreign missions. Prior to that he had dispatched four letters on the same day, March 24, 1566, to his House of Trade with instructions for the care of those members of the Society who were to go with Menéndez. A fifth letter followed a fortnight later confirming the first four.²¹ These letters all refer to the group which Borgia had ordered selected on May 12, 1565.

¹⁹Monumenta, Epistolae Borgiae, III, 798.

²⁰Griffin, 19; she in turn cites Alegre, I, 5.

²¹Ugarte, 68-71; letter of May 3, 1566 may be found reproduced in Alegre, I, 4.

Menéndez had asked that they be allowed to leave with him when he set sail for the New World. The group was unable, however, to leave at the appointed time and it was not until the 28th of June, 1566, that they set out from Spain.

The missionaries sailed aboard a Flemish sloop in company with a convoy bound for the New World. When they reached the waters of the Caribbean Sea, just west of the Lesser Antiles, the fleet continued on to their mainland port, while the sloop steered a course for Havana. Here they attempted to obtain a pilot "who could guide their vessel to San Agustín in Florida. As none willing nor competent could be found, they decided to sail without one, taking with them charts and written directions for the course."²²

The Adelantado, who had expressed such feelings of love and devoted care for the welfare of the Jesuits, had failed in his first duty to them. They were left to the mercy of unknown waters and shoals, with a Flemish crew, to search for a small fortress somewhere to the north on the mainland. "Either through incorrect information or

²²Alegre, I, 6

through error in making the nautical chart which set down the location of the places, they drifted for about a month until September 24, when, ten leagues from the coast, they sighted land between 25° and 26° to the west of Florida."²³ The Captain, not knowing where he was, thought it wise to send some men in the launch to reconnoiter and to get some information as to the distance they were from one of the settlements. The men refused to enter the skiff unless they were accompanied by one of the Fathers. Father Martínez, hoping to quell the mutiny, leaped "into the launch first, inspiring the others by his example and by the extraordinary happiness of his countenance."²⁴

They had no sooner reached the shore when a violent storm blew up. The Captain fired the cannon in order to call them back, but the noise of the gale prevented them from hearing; he then hoisted anchor and made for the open sea. Father Martínez and the men who were in the launch with him were left stranded on an unknown coast.

They traveled with what knowledge they had of the

²³ibid.

²⁴ibid, 6

position of San Agustín, following the eastern shoreline of the peninsula until they came upon four Indian youths fishing off a small island. Hoping that the Indians might give them some information as to their position, the crew jumped ashore. Three of the youths offered them a large share of their catch, while a fourth ran to the nearby village with the news. In a short time more than forty warriors approached the beach. Father Martinez suspected trouble, but the crew made no effort to return to the boat. What followed took place before the unsuspecting sailors could offer any resistance. The Indians entered the boat and suddenly with a great cry, they fell upon the priest and two of his companions and after dragging them to the shore clubbed them to death.²⁵

Thus Father Martínez became the first member of the Society of Jesus to lose his life in the Florida Mission field. Meanwhile, however, the boat carrying Father Rogel and Brother Villarreal was having some trouble. The storm had blown the boat far out to sea. When it had abated, the Captain intended to return to pick up the launch and its

²⁵ibid, 6-7

passengers, "but the Flemings by insistences and even by threats forced him to turn prow to the sea and follow the course to Havana."²⁶ Alegre tells of an old manuscript which records that before their arrival at Havana the ship was driven by another tempest to the shores of the Island of Española; the place where they landed is described exactly and corresponds to the port and stronghold of Monte Christi on the northern coast of the same island. While they were delayed there they made use of a faculty granted to them in an Apostolic Brief and a plenary jubilee was proclaimed. The Fathers labored here for a while and on the feast of St. Catherine, martyr, November 25, in company with Don Pedro Meléndez Marquez, nephew of the Adelantado, they sailed for Havana, arriving there on December 15, "of the same year of '66', not that of '67' as seems to have been erroneously printed in the cited history of Florentia."²⁷

Father Rogel then tried to get help to return to Florida and rescue Father Martínez, but shortly after their arrival a frigate put in from Florida and Father

²⁶ ibid, 6

²⁷ ibid, 10

Rogel closes his narrative with the sad finale: "They related to us what had befallen Father Master Martínez, and the others who had gone ashore in the boat."²⁸

The two Jesuits remained in Havana administering to the spiritual needs of the inhabitants. But when the Adelantado, Don Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, arrived in Havana, they prevailed upon him to bring them to Florida.²⁹ This time their voyage was uneventful and they arrived there in the beginning of 1567. Father Rogel remained at the presidio of Carlos, a small garrison on the southwestern shore of the peninsula; Brother Villarreal went to the city of Tegesta, the site of the present city of Miami, in the southern part of the peninsula on the Atlantic shore, a great settlement of allied Indians with a garrison of Spaniards.

Pedro Menéndez returned to Spain toward the end of 1567 in order to gain reinforcements for his province. St. Francis Borgia assigned six more members of the Company to accompany the Governor on his return to Florida; three Fathers and three lay-brothers, and some youths who wanted to enter the order. Fathers Juan

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Ugarte, 83; letter of Rogel to Polanco

²⁹Alegre, I, 7

Bautista de Segura, Gonzalo del Alamo and Antonio Sedeno, and Brothers Juan de la Carrera, Pedro Linares and Domingo Agustín were the ones chosen. Florida was erected into a vice-province of the province of Perú with Father Segura as its first vice-provincial.³⁰ They were to take their orders from Father Geronimo Portillo, the provincial destined for the province of Perú who was then residing at Seville. They set sail from the port of San Lucar on March 13, 1568 and arrived at the port of San Agustín on June 19, 1568.

The story of the mission from 1568 to 1572 is tragic. Though the Fathers and Brothers were able to effect great good in Havana, their efforts everywhere in Florida met with failure. When Segura arrived only two presidios were left standing: San Agustín and Carlos. Nevertheless, the Jesuits continued to labor for the conversion of the Indians while the governor attempted to restore the ruined garrisons. Finally, however, it seemed best to Father Segura to abandon the posts on the peninsula. He called all the Fathers to Santa Elena to communicate this

³⁰Ugarte, 71-72. Letters patent of Provincial appointing Segura.

resolution to them and to inform them that he intended to begin anew far to the north in Axacan. He chose Father Luis de Quiroz and six brothers to accompany him; the rest he ordered back to Havana.

As is well known, the Mission in Axacan met with disaster after a good beginning, due to the treachery of one Don Luis, a brother of the Cacique. All the Fathers and Brothers were murdered and the Mission post destroyed. With the failure of this outpost, the Jesuits missionary venture in Florida came to an end. The Fathers and Brothers who had been ordered to Havana returned there and a few years later they formed part of the group which erected the eminently successful mission in Mexico.

CHAPTER III

THE HARDSHIPS OF THE FLORIDA MISSION

Much has been written about the difficulties which the Missionaries encounter in their efforts to convert nomadic and primitive tribes to the knowledge of the true God. Even in our own times mission magazines print articles by the reams, telling of this experience of the Catholic Maryknoll Fathers in China or of the escape from primitive devil-worshippers by an American Jesuit in Patna. Still others recount the daily disappointments, defections, ingratitude, brutality of the natives; others the difficulties of language and custom, the great range of climatic conditions, the scarcity of material aid; all these tell us of the missionary and his problems in this great advanced age of the dynamo and the steam-engine. Men who are living today and who have labored on some frontier for Christ and His Church can tell us of their experiences and we sit enthralled by the recital of their sufferings.

Yet, when we consider the troubles of the modern missionary in terms of those hardships which the crusader

for Christ of the 16th century had to undergo, the modern missionary must retire to the background. The 16th Century Spanish and French missionaries had none of the conveniences of modern times to alleviate their sufferings. Transportation and communication were slow; his loneliness must have caused him many hours of disquiet. Nevertheless, he accomplished his task. In spite of all his hardships and afflictions the missions grew, that is, most everywhere except in Florida during the time of Menéndez de Avilés.

Much has been written about the missionary situation in Florida during the time of Menéndez. The story of the Jesuit attempt at Christianizing the native Indians and their failure to make an impression upon their hard hearts, has been sufficiently gone over.¹ The problem at hand, however, has not been treated: Did the hardships the Jesuits suffered from the natives, the climate, and the Europeans, force the superiors to close the Mission?

Spanish Florida was occupied or dominated by various tribes belonging to the Muskogean linguistic group. The most important of these were the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and the many small tribes which served to form the Creek Confederacy. The whole country was thus

¹Griffin, 86

occupied by comparatively small, but hostile tribes, so numerous, that almost every river and every lake has handed down the name of a distinct nation. "In form, in manners, and in habits, these tribes presented an almost uniform appearance. Language formed the great distinctive mark for the European, though the absence of a feather or a line of paint disclosed to the native the tribe of the wanderer whom he met."²

Between Spain's two Atlantic outposts - Tegesta and Santa Elena - there lived four Indian peoples, the Timicuan, the Gualeans, the Cusabo, and the Aix. The Guale and the Cusabo Indians dwelt along the moss-hung isles of Georgia and her low picturesque mainland; the Timucuan lived on the sand plains stretching northward from San Agustín to Cumberland Island and the Saint Andrew Sound in Georgia, and extended inland some forty leagues. The Aix dwelt near the coast close to where the present city of Miami now stands; the site of the present city used to be the Spanish Mission settlement of Tegesta. On the West coast of Florida the Jesuits founded missions

²John Gilmary Shea, Colonial History of the Catholic Missions, 22

among the Caloosa, establishing residences at Carlos and Tocobaga, the latter the site of the modern Tampa, Florida.

It was among these peoples, so different in habits and customs, that the Jesuits began their labors. According to Hodge, "There existed between the tribes marked dissimilarities as to both physical and cultural characteristics. For instance, the Choctaw were rather thickest and heavy, while those farther east, as the Creeks, were taller but well-knit. All the tribes were agricultural and sedentary, occupying villages of substantially built houses."³ The languages of the various groups differed to such a degree that one would not have been intelligible to the other, and often within the same linguistic family the various tribes spoke radically different dialects. Thus with such a diversity of language, a great range of climatic conditions, with mountains and prairies, swamps and lakes occurring in widely separated parts of the region, the native tribes of Florida developed distinct customs influenced by their natural conditions and environments.

In the government of these tribes the unit of political

³Frederick Webb Hodge, Handbook of North American Indians, Government Printing Office, Washington, 1910, II, 622.

as well as the social structure was the clan. This would have proved helpful to the missionaries, for each town had its independent government, its council being a miniature of that of the Confederacy of all the tribes in the family, and the conversion of the Chief or Cacique would have brought the whole group into the fold. The population at the time of the Spanish occupation was about 50,000 Indians, with the two settlements, Guale and Santa Elena, among the Guale Indians, seeming to be the best prospects, yet having the least number of tribesmen.⁴

The moral and cultural outlook, however, of some of these Indians proved to be quite a stumbling block for the Jesuit missionaries. Father Rogel, writing to Menéndez, December 9, 1570, relates the fortunes, or rather misfortunes, of his work among the people of the Province of Orista:

In the beginning of my relations with those Indians, they grew very much in my eyes, for seeing them in their customs and order of life far superior to those of Carlos, I praised God, seeing each Indian married to only one woman, take care of and cultivate his land, maintain his house and educate his children with great care, seeing that they

⁴Hodge, II, 621

were not contaminated by the most abominable of sins, not incestuous, not cruel, nor thieves, seeing them speak the truth with each other, and enjoy much peace and righteousness. Thus it seemed to me we were quite sure of them and that probably I would take longer to learn their language in order to explain to them the mysteries of our Holy Faith than they would need to accept them and become Christians.⁵

Yet, after two and a half months the time for gathering acorns arrived and Father Rogel was left without his flock. They scattered throughout the forests, only returning for certain feasts which were held every two months. In fact they lived scattered in this manner for nine months of the year. Father Rogel says there were two reasons for this:

First because they have been accustomed to life in this manner for many thousands of years, and to try to get them away from it looks to them equal to death; the second, that even if they wished to live thus the land itself does not allow it - for being so poor and miserable and its strength very soon sapped out - and therefore they themselves state that this is the reason why they are living so disseminated and changing their abode so often.⁶

Nevertheless, in spite of what Father Rogel has to remark on the monogamous condition of the Cusabo, and

⁵John R. Swanton. History of the Creek Nation, Bureau of Ethnology, Bulletin 73, Washington, 1922, 56.

⁶Swanton, 57

their apparent readiness to accept Christianity, he still had to overcome the objections of these people of the forests. Writing a little earlier, he tells us of the religious beliefs of the Caloosa Indians at Carlos, a group which he considered not very amenable to the doctrines of Christianity. That God was One, the Creator and Lord of all they understood without much difficulty.

Every man, they say, has three souls. The first is the apple of his eye, the second the shadow he casts, the third his likeness in a glass. When he dies the two latter leave the body, but the first remains in the corpse; hence they go to the graves and ask the advice of their dead as if alive. It must be the evil spirit that speaks to them, for they learn there many unknown things and are advised to kill the Christians. When an Indian falls sick they say that one of his souls has escaped, and the medicine man goes to the forests in search of it and herds it back like one drives goats in an enclosure. Seizing the sick man by the neck they force the truant soul into him again and light fires all around to keep it there. When a man dies, his principal soul enters an animal or fish, and when this dies enters a smaller one, and so descends until it reaches nothingness. Hence it is difficult to convince them of the immortality of the soul and of the resurrection.⁷

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Michael Kenny, S.J. Romance of the Floridas, Bruce, Milwaukee, 1934, 194

Another author backs up what Father Rogel has to say about the religious beliefs of these Indians:

The Indians, like all ignorant and rude nations are very superstitious. They believe that superior beings interfere in, and direct human affairs, and invoke all spirits, good and evil, in hazardous undertakings. Each tribe has their conjurers and magicians, on whose prophetic declarations they place much confidence in all matters relating to health, hunting and war. They are fond of prying into future events, and therefore pay particular regard to signs, omens, and dreams. They look upon fire as sacred, and pay the author of it a kind of worship. At the time of harvest and at full moon they observe several feasts and ceremonies, which it would seem were derived from some religious origin. As their success, both in war-like enterprises and in procuring subsistence depends greatly on fortune, they have a number of ceremonious observances before they enter on them. They offer in sacrifice a part of the first deer or bear they kill, and from this they flatter themselves with the hope of further success. When taken sick they are particularly prone to superstition, and their physicians administer their simple and secret cures with a variety of strange ceremonies and magic arts, which fill the patient with courage and confidence, and are sometimes attended with happy effects.⁸

Little wonder, then, that the Jesuits almost despaired of ever effecting their conversion. Hodge goes so far as

⁸Swanton, 78; he quotes Hewat.

to accuse them of cannibalism, an experience which the Jesuits working in Brazil were not unfamiliar. Yet in spite of what has been said about the fickleness, cannibalism, and religious beliefs of the Indians, the missionaries might have succeeded, but for other circumstances. Fathers Rogel and Segura, and Brother Villarreal all express themselves as hopeful of the ultimate conversion of the Indians. They did not consider the Indians impossible, though they did think them to be more warlike, intractable, and fickle than was conducive to speedy results in their work.⁹ Father Sedeño, a later arrival, realizing that something drastic had to be done, did not propose the utter abandonment of the field, but the consolidation of the missionary forces in places where colonists from Spain were being distributed and then to carry on their labors using these places as bases.¹⁰ And not so many years later the Franciscan Friars were to induce these same Indians to become faithful Christians. No, it cannot be admitted that the stupid savagery of these aborigines was the prime cause for the failure of the mission.

⁹Ugarte, 78-104

¹⁰ibid, 112; letter of Sedeno to Francis Borgia.

Nor can we say that the inhospitable country in which they lived forced the temporary closure of the mission posts. Admittedly, Florida was considered by some contemporary as a "Land of bogs and the very worst country under the sun."¹¹ Lowery states that Florida was "remarkable for its slight elevation above the sea, which nowhere exceeds 400 ft., its highlands are confined to the upper end of the peninsula while its entire southern extremity below Lake Okecholee is but one vast swamp, barring a narrow strip along the Atlantic. Its soil, largely composed of pure sand, is of a rather infertile nature, and its climate, insular and tropical."¹² Brother Francisco de Villarreal in a letter to Father Juan Rogel says:

All of us here are well, thank God Who helps us easily endure in this land many hardships which in another would seem unbearable. I say this on account of the swarms of mosquitoes during three or four months. For several days and nights we were unable to get even an hour's sleep. Besides for a few days we were without food, and whatever sleep we could snatch was taken close to the camp-fire stifled by its smoke the only way to avoid the swarms of mosquitoes.¹³

¹¹vd. Chapter II, 15, above

¹²Lowery, 12

¹³Ugarte, 75

Besides the mosquitoes, the missionary had to expect a great deal of rain and the heat furnished by the proximity of the Gulf-Stream kept the verdure growing throughout the year.

Added to an inhospitable climate, the missionaries were constantly plagued with the thought of famine. The Indians' food supply was certainly monotonous and even for them sometimes downright precarious. In the boats which carried the European colonists to Florida, many plants had been carried, but even with the greatest of care the missionaries did not consider the land capable of sustaining European life from their yield without large importations of flour and other goods from abroad. The Indian could not be expected to develop agriculture beyond its most primitive stages, when game and fish were so abundant. Since the timber on the land defied all the efforts of the Indians, with their inadequate implements, to cut it down, they were forced to plant in the poor timberless land where they worked it so little that the weeds soon vied, on better than even terms, with the corn.¹⁴ Fish and game, notably the alligator and deer, furnished their proteins. Nevertheless, the scarcity of food did not move the Jesuits to abandon their missionary labors.

¹⁴ John Tate Lanning. The Spanish Missions in Georgia, Chapel Hill, 1935, ch. II, 19.

Nor can we say that the foreign corsairs were responsible for the failure. Years before the Provinces in Brazil had received a more disastrous blow than the Florida Province had suffered at any time in its seven year history. Father Inácio de Azevedo, enroute with forty companions to take up their work in Brazil, were martyred by pirates.¹⁵ For Florida, Pedro Menéndez de Avilés handled that situation uniquely and with dispatch. His rapid descent upon the French colonists at Fort Caroline, and his victory at sea over Jean Ribaut squelched any further large organized attempt to do the Spaniards out of their Florida land while Menéndez was still alive.

Neither can we blame the failure on the missionaries themselves. Father Antonion Araoz, whom Father Francis Borgia had appointed the head of all Spain's Indian Missions, received a letter from Borgia telling him of the qualities needed by the men destined for such a venture.¹⁶ Only men tried in virtue, men willing to bear patiently the troubles and hardships of a mission outpost, men sufficiently carried away with the thought of working exclusively for God's greater honor and glory were to be chosen for this sort of work. Above all, they must have

¹⁵Mid-America, loc. cit., Jacobsen, 21 ff.

¹⁶Monumenta, Epistolae Borgiae, III, 446-448; Patri Antonio Arozii, Roma, 16, Martii, 1567.

prudence.

That all the Jesuits chosen for this field had these qualities is evident from their labors, sufferings, and martyrdom. Alegre¹⁷ gives a eulogy for Father Martínez, in which he tells of the many experiences which the good Father had which prepared him for his Florida Mission. He had acted as superior, residence superintendent,¹⁸ lecturer, orator and preacher, and finally as an army chaplain with the troops of Don Martin de Cordova, Count of Alcaudete, in northern Africa. Segura, Quiros, Sedeno, Rogel, and all the Brothers are given much praise by this same author for their humility, charity and judgment. Only one, Father del Alamo, is thought unfit for the missionary work and he was recalled to Spain as early as was possible. Alegre says, "he was a man of rare talents, but rather for the lecture chair and pulpit than for the forests and huts, in which being unable to serve with his literature he was dangerous more by the delicacy of his character and the harshness of his judgment."¹⁹ Kenny gives a brief summary

¹⁷Alegre, I, 7-10

¹⁸The Jesuit term for that particular office is "Minister". He is a house official who receives just as much authority as the Rector allows him. His principal duty is the care of the buildings and dining rooms.

¹⁹Alegre, I, 25

of the life and works of each of the men who labored in the Florida Mission field and his estimate of the men proves them to be ideally suited for the work which they were called upon to do.²⁰

Hence, it would be wrong to charge the Jesuits themselves with lack of ability, self-sacrifice, and prudence in their Florida undertaking. The blame for their withdrawal must be placed elsewhere. Lanning in his Chapter II, traces the "Failure of the Jesuits" in a way that might lead us to presume that the Jesuits were responsible for the closure of the Mission.²¹ History disproved that thesis. The Jesuits were very optimistic and likewise zealous for the spread of the Faith. The letters of Rogel, Segura, and Sedeno to their religious superiors, principally to St. Francis Borgia, show them to be men of courage, fighting against odds over which they sometimes had no control.²²

We cannot, then, blame the Indians for being engrossed in their pagan practices, nor for being stirred up to bigoted

²⁰Kenny, 205-209

²¹Lanning, Ch. II, 33-58

²²Ugarte, 78-118

frenzy at times against the new religion, nor for their hatred against the Spaniards. Neither can we charge the European pirates; nor can we credit the poor climate, nor the Jesuits, with the Florida debacle. No, the hardships endured from the Indians, climate and French and English corsairs did not cause the Mission's abandonment. We must look elsewhere.

CHAPTER IV

PEDRO MENÉNDEZ AND ST. FRANCIS BORGIA

The outstanding figures in the foundation and colonization of the Florida Mission field are two: Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, the Governor and Adelantado of Florida, and St. Francis Borgia, former Duke of Gandia, grandee of Spain, and General of the Company of Jesus. Menéndez was the chief civil authority for the Floridas; Francis Borgia was the remote superior of the gallant band of missionaries who attempted to further Christ's Kingdom among the aborigines of North America. Upon the shoulders of both men ultimately rested the responsibility for the success or failure of the Florida venture. It was their duty to prepare, staff, maintain and encourage the missions.

Yet, the Florida Mission did not thrive. Was Borgia unfaithful to his word? Was Menéndez guilty of neglect of duty? While it is true that the savagery of the Indians, the inhospitable climate, the depredations of Foreign pirates, helped partially to bring about the withdrawal of the Jesuits, still they would not have been sufficient causes

for the debacle. Proper support from the leaders might have prevented the closing of the Mission. Borgia, hampered as he was with a lack of men; with missions all over the world to be supplied; was sparing in his promises. Menendez, anxious to further his project at any cost, was lavish with his promises. His failure to comply with these promises, combined with all the other difficulties, conspired to defeat the dream of spiritual conquests in Florida. To this in October, 1572, was added the death of Borgia, whose solicitude for the mission was unquestioned. But the details of the story are longer in the telling.

Avilés is a little seaport town in the Asturias, where "earth and sky bear men who are no tricksters nor babblers, but honest, truthful, faithful to their King, generous, friendly, light-hearted, merry, daring and warlike."¹ Pedro Menéndez was born here on February 15, 1519, two years after Martin Luther appended his theses to the Church door at Wittenberg. Reared in the mountains, in sight of the ocean, the love of the sea was in him and before many gray hairs had graced his brow he was to illustrate and supplement the list of Asturian virtues. He was descended from ancient and illustrious ancestors, but

¹Kenny, 95

because he was merely one among twenty brothers and sisters, he was poor; a condition which he set out to remedy early in life. At the age of thirteen he ran away from home in the hopes of seeking his fortune afar. But the family got him back and to insure his tarrying in the country, they betrothed him at fourteen to Ana Maria de Solis, who was ten years of age; "which event," says the Memorial, "did not suffice to keep him at home, for we find him at fifteen, taking command of a crew about to surrender to French pirates and leading them to victory."² The story of his early life is packed with one sea battle after another and his historians, Meras and Barrientos, relate striking examples of his valor and daring.

While still a young man his deeds had attracted so much attention, that the Regent of Spain, Maximilian, commissioned him to punish some corsairs and their leader the notorious French freebooter, Jean Alfonse, who had waylaid a dozen richly laden Spanish merchantmen. "Without being given one real for it,"³ he mustered a force, overtook the enemy between Belle-Isle and La Rochelle. He captured five

²De Solis. Memorial of Pedro Menendez de Aviles, translated by J.T.Connor, Deland. Florida State Historical Society, 1928. See note on page 40. This work will hereinafter be cited as Connor.

³Connor, 42

prizes from them and with signed affidavits from the officials of the port that the goods would be delivered to their rightful owners, he returned to Spain.

In consequence of all his victories over the pirates, Charles V ordered him to fight all corsairs, a duty which Menéndez executed so capably, that he was named Captain-General of the fleets of the Indies, in 1554,⁴ the most responsible office in the Spanish navy and a position which had been exclusively filled by appointees of the President and Council of the House of Trade.

The King had acted wisely in this matter because the efficiency of the India fleets was at a low ebb. Whole fleets had been captured by British, French, or other Lutheran pirates. "Lutheran" being the blanket designation for all heretics, a supposed justification for the pirates to loot the treasures of the dominant Catholic power, Spain. The laxity of the House of Trade was making freebooting a profitable profession and the King took the means to remedy the situation.

Yet, Menéndez was ever after to be harrassed by the officials of the House of Trade, even being forced to serve a term of twenty months in prison, being freed only

⁴Kenny gives Charles V, 96; Connor, 43, gives Philip.

by the intervention of the King. He wrote to the King asking for complete exoneration: "For I do not care to retain my honor unless it follows a just discharge of their accusation... I possess but my sword and my cloak and my honor, which are great riches to me, because I have been fortunate in my service to your Majesty."⁵

From 1554 to 1565 Menéndez made the regular trips with the Indies fleets, performing his duty so well that Spain was considered the first sea power of the world, until she lost that distinction to England soon after she had lost the greatest sea captain of the age. His achievements helped fill the Spanish coffers and relieve many pressing problems from the King.

The events of the next seven years, 1565-1572, have been told in detail in Lowery, Lanning, Shea, and more recently by Kenny. This period was filled with trips to and from Spain and his varied interests; but dominating it and shining through it all is his absorbing passion for Florida.

Menéndez has been treated rather harshly by historians, for a man who attempted so much for his God, King and Country. John Fiske dismisses him with the condemnation

⁵Ruidiaz, II, 44; also Kenny, 98

that he was "an admirable soldier and matchless liar, brave as a mastiff and savage as a wolf."⁶ The man deserves more consideration than that. Alegre calls him a "man of solid piety;"⁷ Kenny enlarges on that theme and attempts to extoll him to the skies. He is a loving father, devoted husband, loyal, unselfish, true to his honor and his word, not susceptible to bribes and above all else a pious and sincere man.⁸ These chroniclers and others go to great lengths to impress upon the readers what an illustrious and capable man he was.⁹

Probably a truer estimate of the man can be attempted. He was a man with a singleness of purpose which must be present in any outstanding leader. From the time of his first encounter with the pirates to his death in 1574 this fact shines out above all others. He attempted to follow the old Roman adage of "age quod agis" in all his undertakings. He was as Bourne has said "a dreamer with a grand vision," yet this was coupled with the outstanding ability to put his dream into action. When given the command and Governorship of the Florida enterprise, he

⁶Fiske, II, 512

⁷Alegre, I, 5.

⁸Kenny, 93-152

⁹cf. Connor. Meras and Barrientos are two other chroniclers of Menendez.

realized to the full the opportunities for his God, King, Country, and himself. Added to this singleness of purpose he was a daring and brilliant soldier, becoming noted for his relentless and always successful warfare. He was a man of exceptional ability, a skillful strategist, so well exemplified when he was a mere boy, in his fight with the French pirates;¹⁰ also he seemed possessed of an intuition, which we could almost call divination, before deciding upon a course of action, as when he convinced his captains that it was the right thing to attack Ribaut's fleet and then by forced marches to go and surprise Fort Caroline.¹¹ J. T. Connor has this to say:

We recognize his remarkable tact in always consulting his captains, and always bringing them to his way of thinking; his kindness and cleverness in dealing with the Indians; his patience with Garcia Osorio, the Governor of Cuba, and in all circumstances when patience was needed; his quickness and judgment, courage and restraint, which have placed him in the rarer class of men, who, to borrow an old, homely phrase, have as much balance wheel as main-spring. Besides his talents as a soldier and seaman, his versatility manifested itself in his love of music, and in the invention of an instrument for measuring longitude. He was a man of power and

¹⁰Connor, 40-41.

¹¹ibid, 78-79

strength, energy and stern decision, that he was able to inspire unbounded faith in his ability to carry an enterprise to success. ¹²

He was a great man, but like all great men he had his faults.

The most notable of these was his failure to distribute his authority well. Where he was things ran smoothly; but as soon as he left the scene, trouble arose. He himself admitted that one of the difficulties of his career was that he could not bilocate himself and be in several places at once. The Fathers of the Society constantly complained that they could not proceed because "everything... is at a standstill until the Governor comes," and later "that Governor Menendez will remedy this when he comes."¹³ Again Father Segura informs us that "we are awaiting the arrival of the Governor whom we expect any day, before choosing a site..."¹⁴ From these passages it is evident that all depended on the presence of the Governor; the Governor was not to be found.

Needless to say, the colonization of Florida was uppermost in the mind of Menendez and his many wanderings

¹²ibid, 34

¹³Ugarte, 83

¹⁴ibid, 99

for the King merely delayed any action in that field. His fortune had been expended for this enterprise and at all costs the venture had to be a success. He soon became convinced that competent instructors were needed to civilize the natives. He had said that "it is only a loss of time to attempt to plant the Holy Gospel in this country by means of soldiers."¹⁵

His first efforts to obtain members of religious Orders were directed toward the Dominicans, though in his letters to the Jesuits he protested that he wanted them and only them, a fact which might well bear out Fiske's severe censure of him. Father Segura writes:

What he (Menéndez) told us in Seville about not wanting to bring other religious but only Jesuits, I later found out was rather by way of inducement to persuade us to come.

For the Superior of a Dominican monastery in Puerto Rico told me, when he came there, that the Governor had tried hard to get Religious of that Order, but that their Provincial had refused.¹⁶

Promising them a rich harvest of souls, Menendez directed his appeals to the Fathers of the Society of Jesus. Making his requests first through Fathers Avellaneda, Gonzalez, and Cordova, and finally in March, 1565, to Borgia himself, then Vicar-General of the Order residing in Rome.¹⁷

¹⁵Lowery, 265

¹⁶Ugarte, 68-71

¹⁷Monumenta, Epistolae Borgiae, III, 762

Delays followed, caused both by some members of the Council of the Indies¹⁸ and by some members of the Society itself, notably Father Gonzalo Gonzalez.¹⁹ But these objectors were finally eliminated and the order was given that some of the Fathers should go to Florida.²⁰ The King issued orders for their upkeep,²¹ though Father Kenny states that Menéndez had made himself personally responsible for them.²²

The little band set sail for Florida and after an eventful voyage they arrived off an unknown coast on September 14, 1566.²³ The subsequent story of the martyrdom of Father Martínez has been sufficiently gone into by other writers of the period.²⁴ The two remaining Jesuits were returned to Havana, there to await the arrival of the Governor.

In the meantime Menendez had returned to Madrid and we find him penning another letter to St. Francis Borgia, January 18, 1568. The epistle is rather lengthy, though it is of sufficient importance to quote the pertinent

¹⁸Alegre, I, 5

¹⁹Kenny, 30; also 153-160

²⁰Alegre, I, 5

²¹Ugarte, 68-71

²²Kenny, 171

²³Father Zubillaga, S.J. has an article in the Archivum Historicum Societatis Jesu, Roma, 1938

²⁴ibid; also Griffin, 36-50

passages at length. In it, Menéndez renews his protestations of devotion and cooperation and informs the General of the Jesuits what might be expected upon the arrival of more Jesuits, though he himself had made no preparations for them. He says:

Last October I informed Your Excellency of the situation in Florida and of the great need there of Fathers and Brothers of the Society to instruct the Indians who are very desirous of Baptism..... As we have already established friendly relations with the Indians for more than three hundred leagues along the coast and for a much greater distance inland, it is necessary that Fathers and Brothers be apportioned throughout the provinces.... In particular, letters have arrived from that region, written in September by the Spaniards dwelling there, saying that last June they penetrated three hundred leagues from the port to within two hundred leagues of New Spain. Everywhere the Indians abandoned their idols and asked for the Cross, because the Christian teaching received by friendly Chieftains had penetrated even there. All wanted to become Christians, so they sent gold and silver from their mines. The Captains there earnestly beg for Religious, for they say the Indians will be easily converted and great benefits will accrue to New Spain and Florida. There are excellent ports and well-manned forts to defend the coasts from Lutheran invaders and thus the Holy Gospel may be firmly established without hindrance by the Religious who come, as Our Holy Mother the Church commands. On learning this my convictions were strengthened, the more so since the Generals of the other

Religious Orders offered me members of their Orders suitable for the undertaking by their fervour and virtuous life. I thanked them for their kind offer, but replied that for the first three or four years, I did not wish to have Religious of so many different Orders, since I had brought with me two Fathers of the Society, six more were on the way, and twelve more would come in June. For the present I wanted this Order and no other Order to instruct the natives, though at the end of four years when all had become Christians, other Orders could send their members. The Society of Jesus and no other Order has been entrusted with preaching the Holy Gospel in Florida and with teaching the natives of that vast region, hence, Your Excellency will realize the grave obligations upon those going to that land of imitating the Apostles to the extent of their ability. They may rest assured that I shall assist and honor them as is fitting, giving them full opportunity to labor without danger to their persons. The soldiers will open the door by pacts of friendship with the Chieftains, so that they may enter to preach the Gospel.²⁵

The letter continues with the promise of Menendez to found a school at Havana, which will be a place for the sons of friendly Chieftains to learn Christianity and also "for the service and advancement of the Society, because all the Fathers and Brothers going to Florida, New Spain and Peru, or any other part of the Indies must

²⁵Ugarte, 73-74

go first to the residence there and thence be dispatched to the regions and provinces assigned them."²⁶ Menéndez promises all help, as can be readily seen from the above letter, and then attempts to place the burden for the success or failure of the mission upon Father Borgia and the members of the Society.²⁷ But he did not know Francis Borgia. The Jesuit General was a match for him. St. Francis knew the size of his Society; he knew the excellent opportunities of exclusive right to the Florida Field; but he restrained himself, neither attempting to falsify his promises to Menéndez, nor to the King. It is necessary for the story to know the background of this man.

On October 28, 1510, in the ancient moorish stronghold at Gandia, a boy was born to the third Duke of Gandia, Juan, and his wife, Juana, the granddaughter of King Ferdinand of Aragon. In fulfillment of his mother's vow and in gratitude to the Saint of Assisi, the child was baptized by the name of Francis. The first ten years of

²⁶ibid, 74

²⁷ibid, 74

his life were spent at Gandia. He was tutored by a Canon of the Collegiate Church and being a precocious and intelligent child, his progress in the arts was remarkable. His father, however, insisted that he be trained to inherit his family titles and lands worthily, so his next few years were devoted to riding and fencing. Throughout these years he remained a model of piety. His family then sent him to the University of Saragossa, where he completed a brilliant course, entering in 1528, at the age of eighteen, the court of the young Emperor, Charles V. In 1539 he was appointed Viceroy of Catalonia, an office in which he proved himself an able administrator, financier and judge.

With the death of his father, he succeeded to the Ducky of Gandia. There he met Blessed Peter Faber, one of the first companions of Saint Ignatius Loyola. Borgia became attached to Faber and the Society of Jesus, founding a University for them at Gandia. On the death of his wife, Eleanor de Castro, he pronounced the vows of the Society of Jesus, entering their ranks a few years later when he had sufficiently provided for his large family.

Acting in various official capacities for the Society of Jesus in Spain, the most important of which for the

story of the Missions was that of Commissary General, he was called to Rome in 1561. When the second General of the Company, James Lainez, died, 1565, Francis Borgia was chosen Vicar-General and in July of that same year, he succeeded to the Generalship of the Order.

Francis Borgia became almost a second founder of the Society of Jesus. Under him the Company prospered, the constitutions were applied; a course of studies was mapped out; many new candidates were admitted; the missions spread throughout Europe, Africa, India, Japan and North and South America. His princely relations and connections helped his work; he founded the Roman College and for many years he worked diligently to establish a Congregation of Propaganda in Rome, which group was to have complete control of mission work, under direct papal supervision. ²⁸

But his work was constantly hampered by quarrels and bickerings, by the hostility of persons in high places, by dissatisfaction among some of his subordinates. Yet through it all the strong character of Francis remained firm. At the age of seventeen he was described as "a man with all the fierce strong passions and the wild blood

²⁸ Shiels, 18

of the south and of his Borgian ancestors. He was strong, beautiful, ambitious, clever, fascinating; he was chaste and virtuous and through experience had developed a deep reserve." These virtues were to remain with him all his life; he was to add to them zeal and self-sacrifice for the glory of God. His own wish had been for solitude that he might have greater scope for contemplation. But during his last illness he was to confess his real service for God: "It was when I was Viceroy of Catalonia that God prepared me to be the first Commissary General and then General of the Company... I learned to decide important questions, to settle rival claims, to adjust differences, to see both sides of a question as I could not otherwise have done. Everything has turned out for the greater glory of God."²⁹

St. Francis is to the Jesuit the General of the Missions. During his term of office the Society sent its members throughout the world. Florida was to be the recipient of his care and solicitude. Upon the receipt of requests from Menendez and Philip II, the interest of the General was never to lag until almost on his deathbed when

²⁹Margaret Yeo. The Greatest of the Borgias, Bruce, Milwaukee, 1938, 349

the order was given for the withdrawal of the Jesuits from Florida and their subsequent assumption of labor in Mexico City.

Borgia undertook this Florida mission at a time when the Fathers of the Society were occupied with the task of electing a new General and against the advice of those worthy Fathers of the Curia.³⁰ The charge might be made that this was a personal venture of the General. The Provinces of Spain were not able to meet the demands of men and money which such a venture would require. Borgia insisted and the men were chosen for the undertaking. Such a charge could not be proven. Francis knew that an opportunity had presented itself; an exclusive right to enter and hold this Mission district in the outposts of New Spain; it was merely an entrance, a wedge, and he was not going to give it up.³¹

The Society of Jesus at that time was divided into four assistencies, one of which comprised Spain and the Spanish West Indies. Four Provinces had to bear the brunt of any missions which were established in the Spanish possessions in the New World. It was only natural, then,

³⁰Alegre, I, 4

³¹Ugarte, 89

that trouble should arise between the Provincials concerning the allotment of men for the new field. Francis Borgia, wishing to relieve some of the trouble, appointed a Procurator for the Missions in the New World and erected two new Provinces, the Province of Peru and the Vice-Province of Florida, later to change into the Province of New Spain.

From the sending of the first group of two Fathers and one lay Brother in 1566 to his death in October, 1572, Father Francis kept up a constant and fatherly interest in the Missions. His letters to various superiors in Spain invariably mention the Florida venture. To Father Avelaneda he wrote in July, 1566, "I am waiting for news of Father Martínez's departure and his companions whom he takes to Florida."³² Writing almost a year later to the same Father he says that now that Father Martínez is dead, others should have great strength, but "don't do anything foolish."³³ And on the same day he wrote to Father Bustamente "that the Mission be continued even though Martínez is dead."³⁴

This interest of Borgia was not one of mere routine,

³²Monumenta, Epistolae Borgiae, IV, 283

³³ibid, 431-432

³⁴ibid, 425-427

a part of his duty. Some of the men chosen for the Florida field were personal friends of his. Father John Baptist de Segura, whom Borgia had appointed vice-provincial for Florida received a very affectionate letter from the General, along with instructions for the Mission. 35

Throughout the seven year period Borgia attempted to meet the demands of Pedro Menéndez. Menéndez continually asked for "labors for the harvest," and though the infant Society could not meet the extravagant requests of both the Adelantado and the King, St. Francis did try to placate them. Replying to a letter of the Governor, March 7, 1568, Borgia praises the pious desires of Don Pedro, approves of the college at Havana, but rejects the plea for Bustamente.³⁶ Writing the same day to Father Bustamente and the next day to Father De Saavedra, he asks them to implore the Adelantado to be satisfied with six men instead of the twelve whom he wished. 37

But Menendez was not alone in harassing the General for reinforcements. Rogel had long been begging Father Francis to send more teachers for the school and missionaries to aid the work in Florida. Toward the end of the year, 1568, Borgia sent Rogel a very encouraging letter:

³⁵ibid, Iv, 539

³⁶ibid, Iv, 622

³⁷ibid, Iv, 622

Very Reverend Sir: The peace of Christ: The greater are the labors which your reverence has been undergoing in these beginnings, which to the eyes of men seem sterile, the greater is the assurance our Lord gives that the means and the ends will be full of flowers and spiritual fruits, with great rejoicing on the part of those who now behold the aridness (of the field); and they will say of Florida that the sterile has given more fruit than the land which was fertile. This is the winner: the snows and rains that fall on the newly planted fields and the plow that hides the sown seed in the Spring, will show that they were not as dangerous as they seemed, because they will bring the verdure of hope... If it is Florida, flowers may be expected; and if it is the vine of the Lord, fruit may be expected...³⁸

To Rogel this was just the inspiration needed. And so it was with the other Fathers to whom Borgia addressed letters of advice and encouragement.

St. Francis Borgia did all that was in his power to help and direct the Florida Mission. With the number of men at his disposal, his generosity to this particular field was beyond what he could afford.

Florida has recognized the tender and devoted care and interest which Francis Borgia gave to the Mission there.

³⁸ibid, IV, 688-690; translation found in Griffin, 82

They have given him a monument; his picked soldiers watered the sandy soil with their blood; the State has honored his name.

CHAPTER V
THE FAILURE OF SUPPORT BY MENÉNDEZ

Pedro Menéndez, in spite of his many duties in the service of the King, was vitally interested in Florida. He wished Christianity to be spread and his efforts in that direction are quite laudable. But he was just as desirous that the colonization of Florida be successful. He had staked his fortune and the fortunes of many of his relatives and friends on this venture. Failure to found a successful colony in La Florida would result in utter financial ruin for all of them. Success would crown him with many laurels - the favor of the King, high titles and orders, honors, and above all wealth, for the King had granted him generous revenues from the commerce of the territory he should settle. Menéndez knew that his colony would fail as all the other colonies had failed, if he did not subdue and Christianize the natives. His soldiers could go forward and subject the Indians to His Majesty's rule by force, but it would be necessary for the Padre or the Friar to consolidate those gains.

In order to obtain the Jesuits to whom he wished to entrust the Christianization of Florida, Menéndez had promised them his full co-operation. He was going to honor them and treat them according to their dignity. They were to be the Masters. St. Francis Borgia, the General of the Jesuits, had accepted his offer, but had been unable to furnish as many laborers as the Governor desired.

Menendez had been appraised of this fact in the very beginning, with the promise of more men as soon as was humanly possible. The Governor expressed himself as satisfied and continued his protestations of full co-operation.

But did he co-operate with the missionaries as he had promised? In his letter applying for the Company he had said:

It is a land of good climate and altitude in which people who go there will do well; and the necessary efforts being put forth with the people there, and having instruction, discipline and government, there is great hope that it may be a great opportunity for service to God, Our Saviour...¹

¹Monumenta, Epistolae Borgiae, III, 762

Two years later, January 18, 1569, from Madrid, Don Pedro addressed another letter to the Jesuit General. In it he outlined what had been done by his captains and how ready the Indians were to accept Christianity. He painted a wonderful picture for the Jesuit General and closed with the injunction that with conditions as they are any failure to convert the natives will be due to the faults of the Society of Jesus.²

Yet in spite of what these letters said, the Indians were not waiting with outstretched arms for the missionaries to convert them. The letters of the first two Jesuit groups to their General convey anything but that idea. The plain fact is that very little had been made ready for the reception of the missionaries. Father Portillo, the Provincial of Perú, had written to the General, February 2, 1568:

.....according to the reports I have and as it seems to me from Father Rogel's letters, there is not, nor will there be a harvest ready even for the six going there. Hence, Ours, before writing from there, would do well to temporize with Menendez' requests.³

²Ugarte, 72

³ibid, 61-62

In a previous letter, dated July 14, 1567, Portillo wrote to Borgia from Seville telling him that "regarding Florida... the proposition is not so plain as Menéndez says. ...And thus I have not dared to send more men to Florida. Father Rogel until lately has been in an island called Havana because there is no place for him in Florida."⁴ Definitely, the Jesuits were not taken in by the promises of the Governor.

In 1566 Menéndez had begun three settlements in the Florida peninsula: San Agustín, Carlos, and Tegesta. These were merely a few hastily built forts, squalid and some of them far from the well-known shipping lanes and their center, Havana, so that the average pilot knew of them only by their names. Menéndez had not had time to consolidate his work before he was forced to return to Spain.

The three Jesuits of the first band sent by Borgia had arrived in Havana but no one competent enough could be found to take them immediately to Florida. Menendez had failed in his first duty toward the Jesuits. Not all of the blame rests on his shoulders, for the Jesuits did not sail when he wished them to. But this slight mistake was

⁴Monumenta, Epistolae Borgiae, IV, 495

to result in the premature death of Father Martínez and considerable delay the work of Father Rogel and Brother Villarreal.

The captain of their vessel returned them to Havana after the death of Martínez, there to await the arrival of the Adelantado. The two Jesuits busied themselves among the inhabitants of the city, hearing confessions, preaching, and catechizing some of the three thousand negroes who dwelt on the island. These people needed missionaries as much as the Indians and the Jesuits were kept busy instructing them.

Their work was temporarily halted when both Rogel and Villarreal were taken sick with a fever; but this soon abated and while the two were convalescing Don Pedro arrived. They discussed the question of the Jesuits future and a decision was reached.

The departure of the Jesuits from Havana was not an easy one to make. They had endeared themselves to the populace and the people were reluctant to see them leave. They were setting out for a land that was little known and not well settled. In 1567, the Spaniards had but five garrisons in the whole of that vast area called La Florida:

Santa Elena, San Agustín, and Tegesta on the Atlantic coast; Carlos and Tocobago on the Gulf Coast.

Menéndez' expedition first weighed anchor in Charlotte Bay, where Captain Teinoso, the commandant of the post welcomed him. Rogel was to remain here in this very small missionary enterprise for a year before his Provincial, Father Segura, was to send for him. Brother Villarreal continued his voyage with the Governor, landing at Tegesta that same year.

Nothing was ready for Father Rogel, so his first duty was to erect a chapel. Father Kenny says that this temporary structure was the first place of Christian worship on the west coast of Florida.⁵ Rogel began his ministrations to the soldiers, preaching to them and hearing their confessions. In the meantime he prepared himself for his apostolate among the Carlos Indians, adding to his vocabulary of their language new words which he had not learned while in Havana.

But his task was not an easy one for he crossed swords almost immediately with the Javas or medicine men. These fakirs did everything in their power to prevent the Indians

⁵Kenny, 191

from adopting Christianity. Alegre tells us the story:

Opposite a small heigh where the fort of Carlos was situated was another which had a temple dedicated to their idols. These consisted in some hideous masquerades for which the priests vested, and which proceeded down through the village situated in the valley between two hills. Here, like in our processions, the women sang for a time certain chants and made turns in the plains, and at length the Indians went into their houses, offered their worship, danced and returned to their idols in the temple. On many other occasions on which the Padre and the Spaniards, to their sorrow, had been witnesses of this sacrilegious ceremony, the Indians determined one day to climb up the fort of the Spaniards, and to carry before it their idols as if to demand adoration from the Spaniards, or in case these were outraged to have some just motive for revolt, and to have as some afterwards confessed, some occasion to destroy the minister of Jesus Christ. The Father full of zeal, reprimanded them for their attempt and commanded them to stay in the valley; but they, who had no other intention than to provoke the Spaniards to come out of the enclosure of the fortress, persisted in going up the hill, until the Captain, Francisco Reinoso, descended upon them, and in the first encounter wounded one of the idols or masquerading priests on the head by a blow with the reverse of his lance. The barbarians rushed in a frenzy to their huts, armed themselves with their clubs and weapons, and returned with about five hundred to the fort. But since a troop of Spaniards

had already been drawn up under arms, they had to return without attempting to scale the height.⁶

But that was not the only obstacle in the way of the Christianization of the savages. Petty difficulties in the tribes sometimes hindered the Father in his work.⁷ Hence, one does not wonder that so little was done. Food seemed to be the only insurance for a well-attended catechism class. When the missionaries meagre supply of corn gave out, the savages again took to the forest. The Indians had no intention of giving up their idols and pagan practices. Only among the children and a few grownups did Father Rogel meet with any success. Brother Villarreal on the opposite coast of Tegesta had the same story to tell. In a letter written from Tegesta, addressed to Father Rogel, he informs him that:

All of us are well here, thank
God Who helps us easily endure
in this land many hardships which
in another would seem unbearable...

I am instructing the Indian
children up to fifteen years old.
The others do not come, not because
they refuse to become Christians,
but because they find it difficult
to learn. Most of those that come

⁶Alegre, I, 16-17

⁷The story of the execution of Don Carlos and the placing of Don Felipe in his stead is well told in Alegre, I, 16-17

know four prayers and almost all the Commandments. There are quite a few coming now for the neighboring villagers have come here to build a house for the Chief. Now, too, there is plenty of whale meat and fish. For the last two months they were all so hungry that they stopped coming for instruction and came instead for food. However, the young Chief is favorably disposed toward the Christians and I think he will remain so... Some of the Indians are very devoted to the Cross, so I think they will make great progress in the Faith. Some adults and all the children will become Christians, if God wills, while the rest are very well disposed.⁸

Nevertheless it is evident that the missionaries had accomplished very little mainly because of the paganism of the Indians and the lack of proper supplies. When both Villarreal and Rogel complain of a lack of food, the fault must rest with the civil authority, who was supposed to provide an ample supply for the missionaries, so that they could pursue the work of Christ's Kingdom unhampered. Added to this another serious hindrance of their work is made manifest by Father Rogel and later by Father Segura. It was the constant uprising of the Indians, caused by the harsh treatment of the Spanish soldiery. The failure of some of the earlier expeditions may be partially explained

⁸Ugarte, 76

by the hostility of the natives, brought on by the soldiers who despoiled and mistreated the Indians. Again in the Florida of Menéndez the same contingency helped cause the defeat of the Jesuit Mission. The bad example which the Christian soldiers gave to the aborigines seriously hindered the work of the missionaries. Father Rogel in a report to Francis Borgia says:

Would that the devil, the enemy of the human race, had not hindered us, making use of the Christians themselves as obstacles. For wherever we Spaniards go, we are so proud and haughty, that we crush all before us. Thus the soldiers at the fort have begun to treat the natives as if they have been conquered in war. They so abuse and oppress them that the Indians refuse to tolerate it. First they council them to go away for the land is not suitable for colonization, then, when their counsels were of no avail they set out to kill every Spaniard they could and to burn down their towns.⁹

This particular difficulty could have been solved if the Governor were near enough, for Menéndez was feared by his men. But the Adelantado was not in the vicinity and Father Rogel constantly repeated the refrain to the General: "everything is at a standstill until the Governor arrives."

The soldiers were so unruly, and so mistreated the Indians, that an entire garrison was wiped out at Tocobago,

⁹ibid, 82

a settlement a few leagues to the north of Carlos.
 Father Rogel, who accompanied the relieving expedition
 to the ruined fortress tells us:

The Indians in Tocobago have
 risen against us for the same
 reason, and have slain all the
 Spaniards there. Some Indian
 vassals in Carlos who were present
 told me that the Spaniards, who
 were in Tocobago, were cowards and
 that they killed all of them ex-
 cept the chief and the Captain-
 General.¹⁰

Father Rogel was convinced that such wrongs committed
 by the Spaniards hindered the conversion of the Indians.
 He told his General: "I am sure the real cause of this
 has been oppression."¹¹ He argued that if the King, His
 Council and Menéndez checked the abuses practices by the
 Spanish soldiers on the natives "it will be easy, with
 God's help, to convert all the infidels and then Your
 Paternity can send many laborers, for the harvest is great."¹²
 The mission was being beset on all sides and it is almost
 miraculous that any work was done. Uprisings and massa-
 cres had taken place at Xega and Tegesta. Brother Villar-
 real had to abandon his post due to the ugly mood of the
 savages. The mission at Carlos, which depended on the
 fickle good pleasure of the cacique, Don Felipe, was also

¹⁰ibid, 82

¹¹ibid, 83

¹²ibid, 83

in serious danger. Menéndez Marques, the nephew of the Adelantado, and his representative in the New World, decided to increase the garrison.¹³

Meanwhile, new Jesuits were being recruited in Spain for this mission. Rogel, the King, and the Governor, all had been asking for reinforcements for Florida. Menéndez had addressed an appeal in January, 1568, to Father Borgia requesting the speedy appointment of some new missionaries.¹⁴ The group Borgia sent was that headed by Father Segura. Six men were all that Borgia could spare.

The Segura expedition left Spain in 1568, bound for San Agustín; Rogel was to leave Brother Villarreal at Carlos and he was to proceed to San Agustín to meet his new superior.¹⁵ Rogel was to carry on a tour of inspection before meeting Segura and his did not arrive at San Agustín "until July 3,- almost two weeks after Segura had arrived there on June 21."¹⁶ The meeting with Segura and the other members of the Company was a consoling one.¹⁷ Conferences were held immediately and the impressions which Rogel had received on his tour were recounted to eager

¹³Kenny, 92

¹⁴Ugarte, 72; also Monumenta, Epistolae Borgiae, IV, 697

¹⁵Ugarte, 81-86

¹⁶Griffin, 66

¹⁷Ugarte, 86

listeners.¹⁸ The account of the Indians in Guale was so hopeful of success that Segura wrote at once to the General telling him that he was thinking of sending men to Guale as soon as possible.

We must remember, however, that Rogel's impressions were gathered while he was enroute. But he felt that these Indians had not been spoiled by the Spanish soldiery. He thought that the preaching of the Gospel would be comparatively easy, for the Indians seemed to be quite different from the natives at Carlos, "as between civilized folk and savages..." For "I found them so favorably disposed that if the time spent in Carlos had been spent there, much more would have been accomplished."¹⁹

He also thought that if a certain captain were placed in charge of the soldiers, the uprisings which were taking place would be stopped. All this Menéndez might have remedied if he had been present. San Agustín, his principal settlement, was a squalid town by the sea. Alegre says that the people were worn out from lack of food and proper shelter. Death by starvation was a constant fear,²⁰ and

¹⁸Letters telling of trip may be found in Ugarte, 81-90

¹⁹ibid, 87

²⁰Alegre, I, 19

the Fathers of the Segura band gave what they could of their supplies and then set sail for Havana, which place the Vice-Provincial had chosen for the missionary base. ²¹ The journey was without incident, except for a brief stop near Tegesta, ²² and they arrived in Havana sometime between July 10 and July 25.

Menéndez had already planned for the missionary base in Havana. He had written to Borgia from Madrid:

For the service of God Our Lord and of the Society and that a more lively Faith may be implanted in the hearts of the Indians, I will found a school of the Society in Havana.

The school will be very important for the service and advancement of the Society, because all the Fathers and Brothers going to Florida, New Spain, Peru, and any other part of the Indies must go first to the residence there and thence be despatched to the regions and provinces assigned them.²³

Yet again his promises were not fulfilled. Segura and his little band soon established themselves in the city and a church was given to them. A provincial Congregation was held and the work of the mission was

²¹Ugarte, 81

²²ibid, 83-84

²³ibid, 74

planned. These deliberations lasted until the middle of September, during which time the Jesuits were given their marching orders. Father Rogel was to remain in Havana as the Rector of the new college "because he is experienced in the government of the Society and is esteemed by all on account of his virtue and age."²⁴ Father Alamo and Brother Villarreal were to repair to Carlos; Father Sedeño, Brother Domingo, and two young catechists were assigned to Guale; Father Segura then set out on a tour of inspection.

Shortly after his departure the Vice-Provincial returned to Havana. He was not satisfied with the conditions in the city. Rogel had written to the General:

As yet we have not made arrangements for our permanent residence, nor will we do so until the Governor, Pedro Menéndez, arrives. He will provide a residence suitable to God's glory and to the advantage of all. Although the house we have is very well built, still it is rather small for our needs, in educating the children from Florida. Besides the site is rather unhealthy although the country itself is not. Consequently the Vice-Provincial is opposed to our residing here.²⁵

Evidently Segura and the Jesuits were becoming

²⁴ibid, 96

²⁵ibid, 93

tired of the constant delays of the Governor. Menéndez had promised them the required aid and that aid was not forthcoming. Segura had hoped to have everything consolidated and functioning smoothly at Havana before he left. But he was doomed to disappointment. He left for Tegesta in November and shortly after his departure the Governor arrived.

More delay was caused, not by Menéndez, but as Rogel tells the General:

Yet he (Segura) is needed here very much for the Governor is anxious to start the college and since the Vice-Provincial did not decide on a site, I do not dare to choose one until he returns, for this is beyond my authority. So we are anxiously waiting for him and if he does not come within two days the Governor will send a frigate for him.²⁶

Segura, however, did not return to Havana until June, 1569. At that time he wrote to the General telling him of his travels. His tour had convinced him of the sad state of the mission:

Up to the present I have spent almost all my time sailing from one region to another; exploring these coasts which have been discovered in Florida, and considering carefully what places and people are most fitted for separate

missions. At length, after undergoing many perils on land and sea, through which the Divine Providence brought me unscathed, though without desert on my part, I have concluded that those most disposed are the provinces of Guale which has about thirty chiefs and the province of St. Helen...

He continues the letter:

Now, however, on account of the discovery of treachery, as I am told, on the part of the chiefs of Carlos, after the principal chief and some others were killed, the Captain ordered the soldiers to abandon the fort. Consequently Ours who dwelt there had to leave with them.²⁷

It is quite evident that Father Segura was fully cognizant of the real state of the Florida venture. He had but five centers for his men to cultivate. Carlos, Los Martires, Tegesta, Guale, and Santa Elena. Of these places Carlos, Tegesta and Los Martires were considered hopeless because of the treachery of the Indians; the other two were considered good prospects both by Rogel and Segura. Menéndez even proposed to bring colonists to the later places and he already had a garrison stationed there.

²⁷ibid, 103

In Havana the college was still in the incubator stage. Though Segura says "its site has cost him (Menéndez) a good deal, the rest is not forthcoming." The Jesuits had been depending for a long time upon the alms of Pedro Menéndez Marques, Juan de Henestrosa, and other wealthy and generous benefactors. But that which Menéndez promised was missing; the letters of Rogel, Segura, and even Sedeño show that the Jesuits were becoming cool toward the Governor and his colonial policies. Segura even expressed the wish to Francis Borgia that they might go to China.²⁸ He remained in Havana until the summer of 1569 and then went up to Guale where he established new headquarters. Here the majority of the Fathers and Brothers were gathered. Rogel, the rector at Havana, being assigned to a new post, - the village of Driza about five leagues distant from Santa Elena.

Here the Fathers appeared to have some success. The Indians were not as warlike; their religion had taught them to educate their children, to speak the truth, to seek peace, and to preserve cleanliness. Menéndez brought

²⁸ibid, 107-108

colonists and the new mission seemed bound to prosper.

But ill-fortune pursued them: an epidemic broke out among the natives and the missionaries had to devote most of their time to their care until some of the Jesuits themselves became afflicted with the disease. Luckily only one died, the lay Brother, Domingo Baez. Their food supply soon gave out and the Indians began to scatter through the forest when they were well.

The Indians always were fleeing the Spaniards, for the European control meant restrictions to their conduct. The attempt of the Spanish officials to quarter the soldiers upon the half-starving natives precipitated a crisis. The missionaries' lives were endangered, and Rogel, who had been the first to be impressed by these peoples, had to admit that they were as impossible as the Indians of Carlos.

Meanwhile, Father Segura had become thoroughly disgusted with the support he was receiving from the civil authorities and he resolved to make one last attempt to establish a mission. An Indian, by name Luis, had been captured, brought to Spain, feted at Court, educated by the Fathers and Brothers at Havana. He was the eldest son of the leading cacique in a province called Axacan. He had

embraced Christianity and to all intents and purposes was a very pious fellow.

When the Fathers were planning their expedition to his people, he had promised to help them spread Christianity in this new country. At the meeting of all the missionaries in Santa Elena, volunteers were requested for the new mission in the land of Luis. All offered their services, but Segura finally decided to lead the group himself and he chose his companions. Rogel was to return to Havana; Sedeno to Santa Elena,²⁹ Fathers Segura and Quiros, and four lay brothers set out for Virginia.

The story of the venture and their first days there is very well told in Alegre.³⁰ All of the Jesuits were killed and their effects destroyed. Only the boy Alonzo was spared and from him the Spaniards learned the story of the martyrdom of these pioneers for Christ.

Rogel, Sedeño, and Brother Villarreal with three other brothers followed the order of Segura and set out for Havana. Rogel was to return in four months with supplies. Due to the presence of pirates he was unable to leave at the appointed time.

²⁹ibid, 109

³⁰Kenny, 262

The relief ship arrived at its rendezvous but by that time Luis and his gang of butchers had completed their nasty work. The Indians were garbed in the Jesuits' clothes trying to attract the attention of the Captain of the vessel. But he refused to be taken in by their trickery and returned to Havana, where Rogel was informed that the Adelantado was in San Agustín.

Menéndez was irate at the cruelty of the Indians in Axacan and proposed to lead an expedition to discover the fate of the Jesuits. He did not propose to leave for a few months. The foreign pirates were infesting the Atlantic and he still hoped to have the school founded in Havana. Menéndez refused to allow any other relief ship to leave port during the winter and Father Sedeno tried to placate him. He wrote to Rogel telling him of the Adelantado's wish, but Rogel, probably disgusted with the repeated unfulfilled promises of Menéndez and wishing to obey his legitimate superior, sent the supplies in a ship with Brother Carrera. Father Sedeno was quite provoked with Rogel and told him and the Jesuit General so in that many words.³¹ Yet Rogel was acting in a legitimate manner and his evident ignoring of the Governor's wish is proof that the Jesuits had their fill of his procrastination.

³¹Ugarte, 112-116

The relief ship actually was destroyed with a great loss of food and corn.

Finally in 1572, the Governor set out from Havana for Axacan. There with a sufficient force of soldiers Menendez succeeded in punishing the culprits. Father Rogel gathered up what relics of the martyrs he was able to find and they all returned to Havana to await further orders.

CHAPTER VI
THE ABANDONMENT OF THE MISSION

One by one the missions of La Florida had either been abandoned or destroyed, until only the college in Havana remained. It was to this haven that the remaining members of the Company of Jesus repaired after their relief expedition with the Governor to the province of Axacan. The first Jesuit, Father Martínez, had landed on the shores of La Florida in July, 1566. Seven years later the order came from Rome telling the Fathers, Rogel and Sedeno, to pack up and depart for New Spain.

The story of their leaving Florida, however, does not begin in 1572. As early as 1568 letters began to pour into Rome from the missionaries, painting a picture of the utter hopelessness of the Florida situation under all its adverse circumstances. The hardships, which no Jesuit shirked, were far in excess of the benefits to Christianity. Ad to this unfriendly natives, a desolate land, foreign desperadoes, and most important of all, a lack of sufficient support from the chief civil authority and founder of the venture, Pedro Menéndez de Avilés. In spite of the frequent

protestations on the part of the Governor, Menéndez had nothing prepared and his many duties in the service of the King prevented him from bestowing the proper attention upon his Florida enterprise. His captains were unable to keep the soldiers from molesting and treating the natives as a conquered race; consequently these Christians by their poor example hindered the work of conversion. The Jesuits did not fail in Florida, they rather perceived that it was impossible and futile under the circumstances to offer more victims to the obdurate savages and the superiors in Europe agree with the writers of the letters and closed the mission.

The Vice Provincial of Florida, Father Segura, had written to Francis Borgia in December, 1569, telling him that Menendez was carrying on the conquest "in order not to be deprived of his command" and that the Jesuits were the only ones the Governor could obtain to undertake the work in Florida.¹ Here we have the manifestation of a change of attitude toward the Governor and his project of Colonization in Florida. The good impressions of the Indians and the land which the Fathers had, began to fade

¹Ugarte, op. cit., 62

before reality. Father Segura continues in his letter:

I have decided to inform Your Paternity fully of all I have seen and learned here. In this and in the enclosed letter I make several suggestions that occurred to me and ask your advice on other matters that I may proceed intelligently for the greater glory of His Divine Majesty.

First, though Ours here are greatly consoled by the daily occasions for suffering out of love for Christ Our Lord and thereby constantly advance in the interior spirit, still as this alone does not suffice for the fulfillment of the institute we profess, I have decided in the Lord to make known to Your Paternity that due to their many and well-nigh continual labors, their health and bodily strength is failing with but slight benefit to the souls of the natives and with little hope of any judging by what has been seen up to the present as this report will clearly prove.

Father Segura then suggests that they might do better work elsewhere, perhaps even China. Then he continues:

Secondly should Your Paternity decide that for God's greater glory those laboring here should go to other parts where there is greater hope for the conversion of souls, it would be well to send the proper authorizations for this from His Holiness. For I know for sure that the Governor himself and through his ministers will do

everything in his power to prevent our departure..... As he needs clergy to administer to the spiritual needs of the colony, it is evident that he wants us to serve as Chaplains in their absence.²

But the Provincial was not the only Jesuit who saw the futility of their work among the Indians. Father Juan Rogel, who had been one of the three members of the first band to set foot on Florida soil, aired his views about the conditions of the missions. Both Rogel and the lay Brother who had accompanied him had begun their labors in Florida before the second expedition left Spain. Their letters tell us of the work in which they were engaged and of the successes which they had scored. The first letter of Father Rogel to his immediate superior, Father Portillo, the Provincial of Perú, is remarkable for the optimism with which he views the situation in Florida. But a short while later he tells the General that the Indians in the province wherein he is stationed are impossible. He tells him that the natives of Carlos are "energetic, turbulent and intractable."³ But "it appears that the natives are well disposed toward the Gospel and ready to become Christians." This, he informs the

General, is true of the Indians at Tegesta, the fort where Brother Villarreal was laboring with not too barren results.⁴

The final straw for Father Rogel was the defection of the natives in Guale and Santa Elena. His first impressions of these people had likewise been optimistic. He had written the Governor:

Having established our house and chapel at Santa Elena in June, 1569, Father Vice-Provincial ordered me forthwith to fix my residence in the village of Oriza, whither I betook myself with much consolation, in the great desire and hope I entertained that we were now beginning to produce results. At the outset, when I began to deal familiarly with those Indians, my hopes rose greatly, for I saw in their habits and way of living that they proved far superior to the Carlos tribe. I gave praise to God when I saw that each Indian had only one wife, was a worker, and took care of his children and his home. Seeing that they were not contaminated with the social evil, nor incestuous, nor bloodthirsty, nor thievish, and that, among themselves they dealt truthfully, frankly, and without quarreling, it seemed to me that our prey was finally secured and only my tardiness in learning the language and teaching them the Holy Faith stood in the way of their conversion.⁵

⁴Ugarte, op. cit., 75-79

⁵Kenny, op. cit., 259

Yet in spite of these auspicious beginnings Rogel soon learned that the Indians remained friendly and virtuous only while they profited by the presence of the missionaries. As soon as their necessity passed the docility and gratitude of the natives was forgotten. Their hearts seemed as hard and as cruel as the Indians at Carlos. Rogel continued to labor among them, but he knew that the fight was a losing one. The Indians in Guale also were apparently bent upon getting away from the restrictions of both Christianity and the Spanish leaders. At Carlos there had been an uprising; now in Guale the Indians were becoming so enraged with the Spanish policy that Father Rogel was that it was useless to continue missionary work among them. He retired to Santa Elena and there penned some of the letters which led the superiors in Rome to close the venture.

While Father Rogel was wrestling with his problems and reaching his conclusions about the natives, Rome began to suspect that something was amiss. In a routine business letter to Father Aloysius de Mendoza, the General appended a few words about Pedro Menéndez and Florida. This letter was written in August, 1570:

Don Pedro Menendez, the Governor and head of Florida made a great effort to take many priests of the Company to those parts, saying that their stay would be most useful. Now one can understand that it was not useful, because no progress could be made with those Indians, and not convenient because the life they pass there is very difficult, being divided alone among the Indians without hope of converting them because of the barbarism and rudeness of that nation. Being given one and one-half pounds of corn as ration without anything else, some of whom dies from this and others had their abdomens so worn out, that since they were of delicate health and used to study, and who die like the others if they live there long.⁶

Evidently the letters of the Fathers to their superior were beginning to cause some doubts in his mind. Father Borgia then relates the following incident:

Father Segura, their Vice-provincial, says that he wanted to send a Brother out of there (Florida) because it is necessary, but the Captain says that if he were to let someone go out, he would have his head hung from a high post, because such an order must be shown in writing, and it is said that must come by provision of His Majesty, and no one can leave even though it is necessary... It is also said that they (Jesuits) serve as servants of those few soldiers of the

⁶Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu, Epistolae Borgiae, V, 467.

stronghold, and that they have them there because there can't be found priests who will go to such a place of residence.⁷

A dark cloud had come over the Florida mission station. Even Father Borgia seemed displeased with the management and results of the missionaries labors. Added to this came new reports of pirate warfare in the waters of upper Florida. While Father Rogel was in Havana conducting his school and waiting for such time as he could bring the relief ship to Father Segura and the group in Axacan during the years 1570 and 1571, Jesuit refugees were arriving in Cuba full of tales of desperate escapes from pirates on the seas.⁸

In the midst of all this gloom Francis Borgia received a letter from His Majesty the King, Don Philip II, May 4, 1571, opening up the rich field of Mexico to the the Company of Jesus and asking for Jesuits to "go to that part of Our Indies and attend to the instruction and conversion of the natives there." He also asked for more men for both Florida and Perú.⁹ But the startling fact was that the Jesuits were invited to Mexico and by no

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⁷ibid, 467

⁸Kenny, op. cit., 264

⁹Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu, Epistolae Borgiae, V, 577

less a personage than the King himself. Requests had been sent time and again to both the King and the Jesuit General from influential persons in Mexico for members of this new order,¹⁰ and now the flood gates had been thrown open and nothing remained in the way to their entrance. Coming at a time when the reports from Florida seemed so hopeless, this new request must have given an impetus to the General's already failing health. Borgia not only decided to send a group but to found a province which would be independent of Spain and would be called the Province of Mexico.¹¹

While preparations were being made for the new enterprise, Father Antonio Sedeño addressed a letter to the General from St. Helen, February 8, 1572. After recounting his many experiences in a journey from Havana to his mission station he tells the General that we "are all agreed in the Lord that your Paternity should be told personally not only of the Indies but also of the character and conduct of this commander who has supreme authority."¹²

¹⁰Shiels, op. cit., 16

¹¹libid, 16

¹²Ugarte, 116

Here we have the betrayal that all was not well with the Jesuits and the Governor, Pedro Menéndez. Father Sedeno had even involved himself in an argument with his fellow Jesuit, Father Rogel, because of the desire he had to placate the wishes of the Adelantado. But even he had felt that the General should send a Visitor from Rome to investigate the situation. Father Sedeno then concludes with the words:

Unless something occurs in the meantime to change the situation, this is the conclusion I have reached. I intend that our continuing, or abandoning this enterprise will depend on this report, for the conditions could not be worse, at least as long as the Governor is alive. But he, by bringing his wife here and establishing his residence, has clearly manifested his intention to persevere until death, as he himself intimated to me. Your Paternity would do well to let us know your decision. For this may Our Lord enlighten you more than is possibly by letter, for we do not dare to write more plainly.¹³

The sentiments of Father Sedeno merely reiterate those of Fathers Segura and Rogel. Father Rogel being less tactful than the others openly opposed the Governor; Sedeno tried to remain in his good graces all the while he feared and hoped to be freed from his jurisdiction.

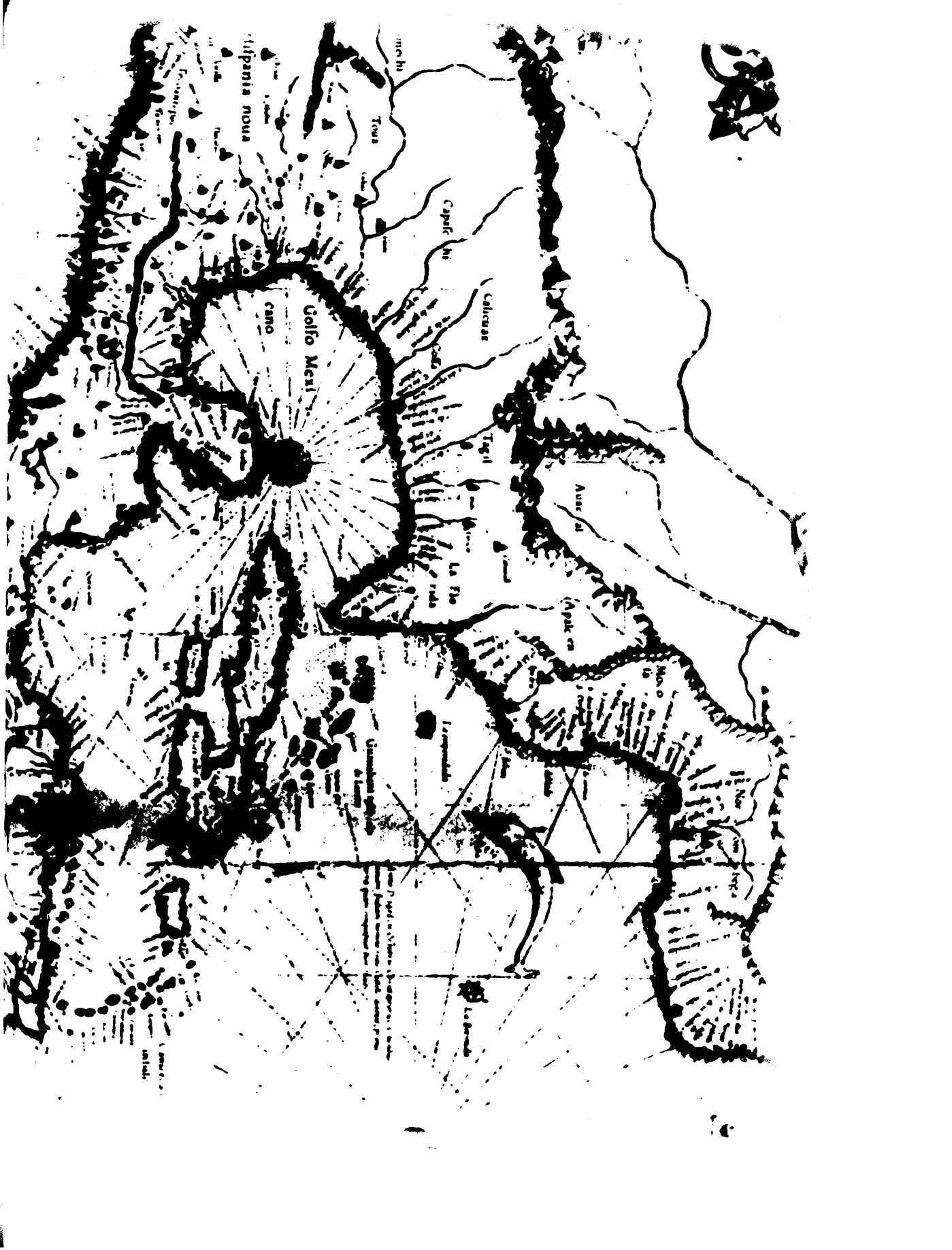
¹³ibid, 117

St. Francis Borgia finally called the new Provincial for the Province of Mexico to Rome and directed him to recall his men gradually from Florida to Mexico unless there was good hope for the college in Havana. A short while later he was to set out with Cardinal Alexandrino as Legate Extraordinary to Spain on the journey which has to end with his death in Italy in October, 1572. The death of the "General of the Missions" saw the death of the first Jesuit Mission to Florida. The limited forces of the young Society were spread throughout the World and the people of Europe and America were clamoring for more foundations. Under such conditions, it was futile to prolong the work among the apparently tottering colony in Florida. The coup de Grace had been administered and Rogel, Sedeño, and Brother Carrera were gradually sent to Mexico; Sedeño and Carrera were sent ahead of the provincial, Father Sanchez, to reconnoiter; Father Rogel followed later after he had closed the Indian school in Havana.

The Jesuits had come to Florida at the request of the Civil Authority. They had labored there for seven years amid the most disheartening circumstances: hardships from

Indians, climate, hunger, foreign pirates, political intrigue, and especially from the lack of proper preparation and support from Pedro Menéndez de Avilés.

The Mission was closed, but since the "blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians," a harvest was later to spring up from the fields they had tilled. Under more suspicious circumstances, the Franciscans were to take up where the Jesuits left off and the Kingdom of Christ on earth welcomed new members from the natives of Florida.



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